

***“Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief: Pre and post-crisis discourses of poverty, wealth, income inequality and the squeezed middle-class on U.K television news”***

By

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## **Abstract**

Post financial crisis, economic and business news has generated conflicting narratives where, for example, bankers and corporate executives enjoy large salaries while ordinary people find their lifestyles under increasing pressure. Accordingly, the issues of income inequality, wealth and poverty have attracted increased scholarly attention. Citizens make sense of such issues via the media, and most often via TV news which is still the U.K's primary news provider. Given that U.K broadcast media are bound by public service obligations, the intellectual puzzle addressed here is whether either side of the financial crisis (2007 and 2014), two TV news providers (BBC1 and ITV1) address financial news generally, and income inequality more specifically, in ways that serve all citizens.

Large-scale content analyses are used to identify recurrent themes within economic, business and financial news, and stories containing elements of income inequality, poverty, wealth and the "squeezed middle". To further explore how these issues are covered, typical cases are developed using critical discourse and multimodal analyses.

The study finds that while economic and business news has increased and has been partially redefined by the crisis, income inequality is covered less in 2014 than in 2007, and since it is embedded within various news stories, the issue is not covered in ways helping citizens to make sense of causes and consequences. Despite indicators that "trickle down" economics is broken and that wealth remains concentrated among a few, even post-crisis, economic growth is presented as a universal solution to ease discomfort and inequality. Although coverage of business actors and corporations is often critical, the wider model of capitalism within which they operate remains unchallenged. In conclusion, despite the seismic financial events and normative expectations that they should discuss issues of social significance, because of institutional, economic and historic causal mechanisms, these channels do not provide any such critique.

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## Glossary of terms.

**Barclays PLC** - A major international banking organisation.

**BBC1** - The primary channel within the British Broadcasting Corporation portfolio and the location of the 10pm bulletin, which is one of the two featured in this research.

**“Big Six”** - The companies supplying most of the U.K’s energy. They are British Gas, EDF, Électricité de France, npower, Scottish Power and SSE.

**Bimodal distribution** - A distribution which has two distinctive peaks.

**Bulletin** - The group of news stories appearing as a fixed time during television schedules.

**“Burglar alarm”** - A type of news coverage where acute issues are reported ahead of routine background events.

**Business Generic** - Business stories about industry sectors rather than specific organisations and people.

**Business Specific** - Business stories about specific organisations and people rather than industry sectors.

**Confederation of British Industry (CBI)** - An organisation representing businesses on a local and national level.

**CEO** - Chief Executive Officer.

**Content** - The issues that are actually in the news, rather than the detail of how they are presented.

**Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** - A means of identifying how language promotes and perpetuates underlying ideologies.

**Critical Political Economy (CPE)** - A theory within media research that concerns the tension/balance/imbalance between commercial objectives and public service.

**Critical realism** - An epistemological approach which explains the social world in terms of the mechanism that shape actions and ideas.

**Economy** - A description of the fiscal affairs of a country in the widest context, embracing elements such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), interest rates, inflation, taxation and so on.

**Economic growth** - The rate at which Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increases year on year.

**The Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC)** - A theoretical curve, and part of a proposition that economic growth eventually stops causing environmental damage.

**Episodic framings** - TV news coverage that articulates stories through specific narratives offered by people, rather than discussing issues in wider, more generic terms.

**Executive remuneration** - The salary packages given to top ranking corporate figures.

**Fatalistic causes** - Causes of poverty outside the agency of human beings such as circumstances of birth, and acts of God.

**Format** - The form taken by a news bulletin, story or item, embracing the order, composition and conventions used to deliver information. In other words, the means of delivering information.

**Framing** - The central thrust of news. Reports are framed to feature some particular elements in the front and centre, while marginalising others.

**Filters** - A series of editorial decisions made by editors that shape and influence news output.

**Financial sector** - A generic name comprising banking and associated industry sectors, such as private equity.

**Gini coefficient** - The most popular way to measure income inequality.

**Global Financial Crisis** - The extraordinary financially-related events, beginning in 2008, that provide the temporal focus for this research.

**Hard news** - More serious news, the provision of which is thought to enhance public knowledge and democracy.

**HSBC** - a major international banking organisation.

**Income distribution** - A more neutral way to describe how the total available income is spread among all recipients.

**Income inequality** - A less neutral way to describe a state of affairs whereby more of the available income is concentrated at one end of the distribution.

**Individual causes** - Where poverty is caused by the actions and decisions of individuals.

**Inequality-health hypothesis** - The hypothesis proposing that there is an association between increasing income inequality and increasing levels of poor health.

**International Monetary Fund (IMF)** - An organisation consisting of a large group of countries which promotes prudent financial management, trade links, increased employment, economic growth and the reduction of poverty.

**Items** - The individual news conventions (edited packaged, live interviews and so on) that contribute to make a single story.

**ITV1** - The primary channel on the U.K's main commercial broadcaster, which must both create value for shareholders, and provide public service for viewers.

**Keynesian economics** - An economic system that advocates government intervention in a nation's financial operations.

**Level 1 Content Analysis** - The content analysis that considers all news reports in the sample, capturing basic data and identifying the location of PIE issues, but stopping short of analysing them.

**Level 2 Content Analysis** - Moves beyond Level 1 analysis, and captures additional detail about PIE issues.

**Lower tail** - The lower (less well off) end of the income distribution.

**Market summary** - An ITV1 only convention that summarised stock market movements and currency fluctuations.

**Mean** - The average value within a range of observations.

**Median** - The mid-point of a distribution, and the line, either side of which, lie 50% of the total number of observations.

**Mode** - The most popular observation within any distribution.

**Multimodal analysis** - A method of analysis taking account of modes of communication beyond words, and embracing film, image, captions, graphics and so on.

**National Minimum Wage (NMW)** - The lowest legal threshold for pay in the U.K, expressed in terms of a rate per hour.

**Neoliberal economics** - An economic system that favours a lack of regulation, allowing markets to find their own level.

**News agenda** - The mix of news provided by a media organisation. Can be expressed in terms of categories (e.g. politics, war, sport and so on), or more generally (e.g. hard or soft).

**News category** - The type of news (e.g. politics, war, sport and so on).

**New story** - One or more consecutive news items all concerning the same event or topic.

**News values** - The elements within a news story that make it interesting and appealing to editors and audiences.

**Occupy** - Global movement who in 2011, arranged a series of protests against inequality, and more specifically against “the 1%” that they felt were receiving an unfair share of the world’s income.

**Othering** - The differentiating between familiar groups of people, and those who do not belong within these groups. Can be done on cultural political, and racial grounds, for example.

**PIE** - Abbreviation to denote poverty, wealth, the squeezed middle and income inequality on a collective basis.

**Poverty** - The state of being poor, officially measured as when a household income represents less than 60% of the national median income.

**Payment Protection Insurance (PPI)** - An insurance policy often sold alongside lending. During the period covered by this research, a number of major banks were accused of selling these policies unfairly to customers, and were forced to pay large amounts of compensation.

**Predistribution** - A way of rearranging the distribution of income before taxation, such as the capping of executive pay for example.

**Propaganda Model** - The model suggesting that news output is heavily influenced by commercial considerations (see “Filters”).

**Public Relations (PR)** - The industry promoting the interests of particular organisations.

**Public Service Broadcasting (PSB)** – A broadcasting system that determines that public interests should be served in terms of the types, mix and style of programming.

**Qualitative methods** - Research methods that move beyond quantification to provide rich detail.

**Quantitative methods** - Research methods that deal in numerical data.

**Royal banks of Scotland (RBS)** – A major international banking organisation.

**“Run on the bank”** - An extraordinary event when a large number of a bank’s customers all attempt to withdraw their money at the same time.

**“Shareholder spring”** - An extraordinary event in 2012, when the shareholders of a number of large corporations voted against the pay awards of the senior executives employed by those companies.

**Social actors** - Any human beings involved in the construction, delivery and content of a TV news report.

**Soft News** - Less serious news, the provision of which is thought to detract from public knowledge and democracy.

**Squeezed Middle** - The large proportion of people whose lifestyles have been diminished by the global financial crisis, and the age of austerity.

**Systemic causes** - Where poverty is caused by wider, government or societal factors.

**Tabloidization** - The alleged shift, across content and style, towards more trivial and less serious news.

**Thematic framings** - TV news coverage that articulates stories through wider, more generic narrative rather than those referring to people (as in “episodic”).

**Upper tail** - The high income end of the income distribution continuum, and the opposite of the lower tail.

**Wealthy** - The state of being well off, with high discretionary incomes and none of the concerns associated with poverty.

**World Economic Forum (WEF)** - An annual global summit attended by those running many of the world’s largest economies.

# **Chapter 1. If income inequality is the “great debate”, is it being debated on TV news?**

## **1.1 Income inequality: ubiquitous or intermittent?**

The notion that income inequality pervades contemporary life is no better illustrated than by neighbouring businesses on a Cardiff street. A well-established car dealership selling expensive marques including Aston Martin and Bentley is adjacent to a bureau offering “fast cash loans” (Figure 1.1). The close proximity of easy credit serving one demographic to the provision of luxury cars serving another is a salutatory reminder of the ubiquity of inequality. Symbolically at least, the days when the poor and the wealthy occupied different spaces (Philo 1995; Toynbee 2003) might now be over.

**Figure 1.1 Neighbours in Cardiff.**



Recently, income inequality and the extremes of wealth and poverty have gained traction as social issues, and like many economic phenomena, are frequently viewed through the prism of the financial crisis. The consequences of what is described as “the most serious crisis of capitalism since the crash of 1929” (Atkinson 2014, p.472) are far reaching, and contain conflicting narratives. While bank executives for example, continue to enjoy high salaries, the fall in real wages for ordinary people in the United Kingdom (U.K) is much higher than that experienced by the citizens of other nations (Machin 2015). Furthermore, millions of “ordinary people” - the squeezed middle-class<sup>1</sup> - have found their lives more financially challenging. Increasing inequality can be explained by the wealthy “pulling away” from everyone else, permitted by the “market forces” advocated by neoliberalism. Indeed, the economic crisis can be summarised as having a dramatic impact on citizens, while

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter called “the squeezed middle”.



complicit financial sector actors have not so obviously suffered (Butterick 2015). But how do citizens find out about these events and make sense of them?

Most people in the U.K use television as their primary source of news (Ofcom 2015), and the prevailing broadcasting system is shaped by the overarching principles of public service. As such, citizens justifiably expect that such seismic financial changes are explored and debated in useful and informative ways by a range of social actors within news reports adhering to noble journalistic principles. The core intellectual puzzle addressed here therefore, is whether such expectations are met the U.K's two major TV news providers (BBC and ITV), and if not, why not? Funded by a legally enforced licence fee paid by the public, it seems reasonable to expect that the BBC should serve the people who pay for it by scrutinising those apparently driving inequality. In contrast, ITV might be expected to be more deferential to those who may be simultaneously funding its programme output by paying for advertising slots punctuating a range of programmes, including news bulletins.

This study's objective is to explain the "social phenomena" of news stories, and the "causal mechanisms" shaping them (Danermark et al. 1997, p.1). Investigating these mechanisms is consistent with the approach of critical realism. In practice, these influencing factors include "organisations, people, relationships, attitudes, and resources" (Easton 2010, p.120). Within the context of this research, these can be represented by the different core missions, levels of regulatory burden, governance, traditions and regulatory constraints relating to these two channels and their employees.

In sum, the objective is to examine how economic, business and financial news (EBF news) more widely, and income inequality, poverty, wealth and the squeezed middle (PIE)<sup>2</sup> more specifically, are covered within flagship bulletins on channels carrying different public service obligations. The choice of years bookends the financial crisis (2007 and 2014), and allows for the possibility that events might have redefined EBF

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<sup>2</sup> Hereafter, the acronym "PIE" is used to refer to poverty (P) income inequality (IE), wealth and the squeezed middle. When income inequality is referred to as a standalone concept, then it will be referred to as "income inequality". "PIE" was among several acronyms considered during this project. It was chosen to reflect the notion that available resources and wealth might be conceptualised as an economic "pie". The inferred premise of course, is that such a "pie" is divided unequally.

and PIE coverage. While the quantifying of themes and trends is important, without some “broader explanatory framework”, such data is “meaningless” (O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014, p.4). Therefore, exemplar cases identified by content analysis are developed using critical discourse and multimodal analyses. More specifically, while recurrent themes and trends are explored and identified using quantitative data analysis, the tones, style and ideological approach of these reports are interrogated and exposed using qualitative analysis. The shaping influences of EBF news on BBC1 and ITV1<sup>3</sup> are drawn upon as a means of organising and analysing data, on the basis that news output is a function of the rules, traditions, habits, style and objectives of those producing it.

The data generated by this research shows that while EBF news has to some degree been redefined by the financial crisis, coverage of PIE issues is sparse and inadequate, and is insufficiently substantive to ensure that these issues become regular topics for public and policymaker concern. Despite clear indicators that “trickle down” economics promising benefits for all is not a reality, economic growth is presented as a universal and unidimensional solution to ease financial discomfort and inequality. Overall, it is empirically demonstrated that the analytical lens of ownership/governance, economic objective, tradition and personnel (in other words, the critical political economy) remains a robust way to explain and evaluate TV news coverage. Despite being normatively expected to expose and discuss issues of social significance, this study shows that because of institutional, economic and historic causal mechanisms, these channels are unlikely to provide any critique of such important contemporary issues. In fact, instead of stirring the public opinion which precedes policymaker action, these broadcasters appear to be part of the central problem, which is that a key socio-economic issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is becoming increasingly serious while media take an indolent attitude towards it.

## **1.2 Setting the scene I: the change in global financial well-being.**

This study must be firstly contextualised within wider socio-economic conditions. Financial inequality existed before the financial crisis, and is expected to continue beyond it (Clark and Heath 2014). In the 1980s, for example, the issue was implicitly

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<sup>3</sup> When the wider organisations are referred to, they are described as “BBC” and “ITV”. Both are multi-channel television broadcasters (for example BBC1, BBC2, BBC3, BBC4, and ITV1, ITV2, ITV3, ITV4). When the specific news bulletins are discussed, the channels are referred to more specifically (i.e. “BBC1” and “ITV1”).

introduced into national consciousness, as comedian Harry Enfield developed two characters which, intentionally or otherwise, highlighted income distribution. While his character “Buggerallmoney” emphasised one extreme, with his reliance on benefits, his alcoholism, his violence and dysfunctional family, the self-made “Loadsamoney” bragged about his “wad” of cash, exemplifying an era of “personal greed” (Butterick 2015, p.80), and emphasised the other extreme.

The choice of 2007 as the first year for analysis provides a pre-crisis point of reference. At that time in the UK, there were high numbers of companies in administration and house repossessions or homeowners in negative equity (Muradoglu 2010). In August 2007, French bank BNP Paribas advised investors that it was unable to honour some investor demands (BBC 2009), a statement described in the blog of BBC’s Business Editor Robert Peston<sup>4</sup> as “scary, to put it mildly” (Peston 2007). The bail out of Northern Rock in mid-September 2007 is considered the first British manifestation of the abnormal and unprecedented economic conditions that followed, acknowledged to have begun with the spread of U.S subprime lending problems (Linsley and Slack 2013; Wisniewski and Lambe 2013).

In 2007, Peston was the BBC’s high profile and influential voice on business matters (Robinson 2008; Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2013; Hulbert 2015) and he described income inequality as “fast becoming one of the great debates of our age”<sup>5</sup>. In 2008, when the crisis began in earnest, more banks required government help and taxpayers found themselves unwittingly supporting banks whose remuneration practices they considered excessive.

### **1.3 Setting the scene II: increasing income inequality.**

Pen (1971) defined income distribution as a process fashioned by numerous variables that no single individual, group, institution or government is wholly responsible for, albeit each has some impact. Central to income distribution, according to Pen (1971), is neo-classical distribution theory where actors are remunerated according to the value they contribute. Depending on these contributions, some earn more than others (Ott 2005; Thomas 2016), and the starting point is that the UK’s prevailing

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<sup>4</sup> During the course of this research, in early 2016, Peston moved from his job as BBC Economics Editor to become the Political Editor of ITV.

<sup>5</sup> This is described and analysed in more detail in Chapter 6.

system of liberal market capitalism incorporates inherent income disparity, and that it is subject to economic, social and geo-political debate.

The political narrative 2007-2014 meanwhile, has developed from the Labour government's stewardship of the banking bailout to a Conservative administration whose response to the financial crisis was to pursue policies associated with austerity (Shaw 2015). Simultaneous with such policies affecting many ordinary people, between 2010 and 2015 the number of UK billionaires doubled (Clarke-Billings 2015), while Oxfam report that 62 individuals now own more than poorest half of the world's population (Elliott 2016). Wealth, however, has become tarnished; executive salaries and perks are still considered unjustifiably high (Colvile 2014), and are often associated with greed and a lack of conscience rather than with endeavour and success. Such concerns are enhanced by stories about the wealthy exercising power to the detriment of the powerless (Chakraborty 2014). Accordingly, scholarly attention has focused on remuneration practices, the advent of the "super-rich" and the processes that benefit them (Turnbull and Wass 2010).

Alongside the prosperity of top-end earners, increasing numbers of people have become reliant on foodbanks and pay day loans to satisfy their basic daily needs (Poverty and Social Exclusion 2013). Forecasts for child poverty are similarly bleak (see Owen 2015). The Conservative Party's austerity policies were given renewed impetus by their victory in the 2015 General Election, with commentators suggesting that since the Liberal Democrats were no longer part of the government, the loss of their regulating impact would result in the hardening of key policies, and the further development of free-market ideals. One month into the new administration in 2015, and amid plans for further cuts to welfare and public services, Julia Unwin of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation declared that "thirteen million people in poverty is still too many in the world's seventh richest country" (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2015).

Through seminal, popular and accessible studies by various scholars including Wilkinson and Pickett (2010), Stiglitz (2013), Dorling (2014) and Sayer (2014), the issue of income inequality has gained wider recognition among less scholarly audiences. Piketty's (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* for example, was an Amazon bestseller and became a "conversation piece" (Moore 2014). Indeed, 2014

was “a year of unprecedented inequality” (Williams 2014). In January of that year, for example, the World Economic Forum placed income inequality as the fourth greatest global risk, rating it higher than other phenomenon including climate change and extreme weather (World Economic Forum 2014). However, as determined by sustained periods of economic growth, by 2014, in the U.K at least, the crisis and recession was considered to have ended. Consequently, 2014 is compared to 2007 to determine whether income inequality features more prominently in TV news coverage.

As the rich/poor gap widens, the more appropriate binary comparison may no longer be that between the “haves” and the “have nots”, but between the “have nots” and “have yachts” (see Jordan and Adam 2007; Wollaston 2007; Hoggart 2012). Amid widely held perceptions that income inequality was too great (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010), and that huge salaries alongside widespread redundancies are unfair (Ladd and Bowman 1998), professional practices and personal behaviours are more closely scrutinised, and the 1%-99% income inequality meme has “inserted itself in the national discourse” (Karlin 2013). If income inequality is indeed the major challenge of contemporary life, then it is also a site worthy of academic study.

Even given the worldwide “Occupy”<sup>6</sup> protests in 2011, it is unclear as to whether there is any will from politicians and policymakers to ease income inequality. Indeed, even before “Occupy”, senior banker Lord Griffiths prescribed that the public should “tolerate inequality as a way to achieve greater prosperity for all” (Hopkins 2009). In 2013, then London Mayor Boris Johnson claimed it was “futile” to try to end inequality and that it is essential to foster “the spirit of envy”; further, he hailed greed as a “valuable spur to economic activity” and called for the “Gordon Gekkos of London” to display their avidity for economic growth (Watt 2013a). Shortly afterwards, then Chancellor George Osborne expressed at least partial support by suggesting “an increasingly common agreement across the political spectrum is that you can't achieve equality of outcome” (Mason 2013). This study asks whether TV news speaks on behalf of the poor, or those being “squeezed”, or whether the interests of the wealthy prevail.

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<sup>6</sup> “Occupy” is the name given to the hundreds of protests across the world (albeit it mainly in the United States) between September 2011 and February 2012, where citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with a number of socio-political issues, and with rising income inequality in particular.

#### **1.4 Income inequality: what should we expect from our broadcast media?**

In the event of a lack of political intent to address income inequality, as inquisitors and challengers, the media are critically important. Their duty, justifiably expected within a regulatory system of public service, is to explain and make sense of the complex, determining causality and consequence with probing and incisive questioning.

Information about poverty and income inequality generally emanates from the media (Page and Shapiro 1992; Zaller 1992; Power 1999; McCall 2013), which not only provides a forum for debate, but also shapes attitudes towards such issues (McKendrick et al. 2008). The case of Royal Bank of Scotland Chief Executive (RBS) Stephen Hester and his bonus demonstrates how coverage contributes to shifts in public opinion. In January 2012, following coverage of plans to put the issue to a parliamentary vote, Hester waived his bonus of £963,000. Since his decision was made before the vote, it could be reasonably concluded that news coverage was an influencing, if not decisive factor.

However, and ahead of scrutiny into how the issue is covered by the media, income inequality cannot simply polarise into the differential between wealth and poverty. The very poorest and very wealthiest for example, are outnumbered by those who are neither rich nor poor, but find their pay frozen, their savings reduced, their pensions delayed and their weekly shopping less affordable. Accordingly, in addition to the media coverage of wealth and poverty, coverage of the “squeezed middle” provides another important point of debate. Since this is a much wider category covering a greater proportion of the population, media coverage of the “squeezed middle” might be even more influential, with dimensions extending beyond financial wellbeing towards political realms. During elections for example, the “squeezed middle” are “swing voters” that potentially hold the balance of power (Woods 2014).

Traditionally, normative models of economic, business and financial (EBF) reporting expect it to reliably and impartially explain complex issues (Seymour 2009; Schifferes and Coulter 2013). The compelling critical narrative is that financial reporting falls short of its ideals, amid concerns about the narrow backgrounds, outlooks and training of journalists themselves (see, inter alia, Edwards and Cromwell 2009; Fahy et al. 2010; Merrill 2012). Furthermore, there are compelling arguments that it

promotes big business and the accumulation of wealth (McChesney 2003; Lewis 2013a), and that it has failed to anticipate notable and impactful financial scandals (Doyle 2007; Tunstall 2009; Tambini 2010). A priori, a case can be made that the U.K's media system appears unlikely to challenge and probe current inequalities. A key question addressed by this study is whether TV news editors and journalists have changed their approach to this significant social issue across the period of the financial crisis.

There are sound reasons for examining the coverage of these issues on TV news rather than on any other media platform. Despite the exponential increase in internet use, 67% of British adults use television as a news source (Ofcom 2015). In addition, TV news is claimed to be both more trusted (McKendrick et al. 2008) and more influential (Bell and Entman 2011) than newspaper journalism, while the impact of audiovisual data is also greater (Graber 1990; 1991). Television has long since been a unifying medium and a "new national force", integrating its audience (Kellner 1990, p.49). In times of crisis particularly, TV news is especially important (Livingstone 1998; Voorhees et al. 2007).

More widely, TV bulletins have strategic, iconic and ritual importance (see Fiske 1987, Casey et al. 2002; Cushion 2012) and amid "the proliferation of audio-visual devices", TV remains central within the cultural landscape (Lewis 2013b). If texts have casual impact (Fairclough 2003), then TV news bulletins will be among the most influential. What follows therefore, is the analysis of how one compelling contemporary socio-political and economic issue is covered on the most consumed and potentially impactful media platform. Analysis and discussion evolves from a broad context where quantitative data enables conclusions about wider news agendas, to a much narrower context focusing on EBF news in particular, and PIE issues most specifically.

### **1.5 Research approach and research questions.**

It is taken as a given, and indeed is well established in research literature, that the ways these news channels present particular issues will influence viewer opinion. In the same way that the media is part of the social conditioning of the viewer, media organisations themselves are also fashioned by a number of surrounding factors. These factors shape the type of news that is reported and the way it is reported.

Operationally, the research aims were to firstly determine which stories were reported, who contributed to them, and in which ways their discourses may shape the overall presentation of these important issues. The wider ontological architecture for this investigation is provided by critical realism, as the description of news coverage is enhanced by a discussion regarding the mechanisms that potentially fashion it.

The empirical research questions are as follows:

- ***What were the general news agendas, and what proportion of news attends to EBF issues on BBC1 and ITV1 10pm bulletins in 2007 and 2014?***
- ***How and why has the coverage of EBF news on these channels changed across the financial crisis 2007-2014?***
- ***What discourses, themes, and social actor contributions do these channels use to articulate the issues of poverty, wealth, income inequality and the “squeezed middle”?***
- ***How can the ways these news providers cover poverty, wealth, income inequality and the “squeezed middle” be explained?***

#### **1.6 The research narrative: a brief sequential explanation.**

In simple terms, and when broken down into a series of questions attended to by each chapter, this study is structured as follows:

Chapters 2 and 3 - **What** are the potential mechanisms that influence news, and **how** might we expect EBF and PIE news to be reported?

Chapter 4 - **What** was the research approach, and **how** was the research carried out?

Chapter 5 - **What** are the broad news agendas of both channels, and **what** quantity of EBF news is present?

Chapter 6 - **How** was EBF news actually reported, and **what** conclusions can be drawn?

Chapter 7 - **What** quantity of PIE news is covered, and **what** are its characteristics?

Chapter 8 - **How** was PIE news actually reported, and **what** conclusions can be drawn?

Chapter 9 - **Why** is EBF and PIE news covered as it is, and **what** are the implications for those affected by PIE phenomenon?



In **Chapter 2**, a series of key shaping mechanisms are synthesised from extant literature as an important precursor to what follows, including the concept of critical political economy and the wider normative ideals of journalism. Two key and recurrent themes are that traditionally EBF journalism serves business communities, and that generically, TV news has considerable linguistic and visual power to influence. In sum, Chapter 2 establishes the overarching theoretical approach, which is that news output is shaped by a range of tangible and intangible factors, and that EBF and PIE news will be fashioned accordingly. While Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical landscapes, **Chapter 3** evaluates and summarises existing empirical research into the ways PIE issue news is presented, systematically considering each in turn, defining them, and reviewing research considering the causes, consequences and cures associated with each. This chapter has two functions. First, it establishes the debates that define the coverage of PIE issues, which in turn inform the content analysis coding. Secondly, it provides a series of assumptions against which empirical findings can be positioned.

Having established this landscape and the empirical points of reference, the research approach and operational processes themselves are described in **Chapter 4**. The approach is to describe social phenomenon, then to identify and analyse the structures and mechanisms shaping them. It explains the understanding of “discourse”, and the reasons for choosing the specific research sample. The merits of mixed method research (quantitative and qualitative) are also explained, before an explanation regarding the two levels of content analysis, and the textual, multimodal discourse analysis and interview that follow. The empirical results generated by Level 1 Content Analysis detailed in Chapter 4 are duly outlined in **Chapter 5**. This Level 1 analysis considers the broad news agendas on BBC1 and ITV1, and reveals that news is homogenous, increasingly covered more serious issues (“hard” news) and featured more EBF news in 2014 than in 2007. Potentially therefore, these channels provide potentially appropriate platforms for the informative and useful reporting of EBF and PIE issues.

In order to develop the EBF news themes identified in Chapter 5, **Chapter 6** demonstrates that qualitative analysis helps to explain quantitative data. It shows

how in 2014, economic growth is presented as a panacea, how the financial sector dominates, how EBF news is often simplified and trivialised, and how alternatives to neoliberal capitalist models are absent or marginalised. This chapter also describes how EBF news has become more people-focused and less reliant on statistical data, and through a case study concerning Barclays PLC, it challenges traditional theories that EBF reporting is deferential to corporate affairs, concluding that the financial crisis has, to some degree, redefined the way such news is presented. While Chapter 6 provides conclusions about the wider category of EBF news and generates some expectations ahead of analysis of PIE issues more specifically, **Chapter 7** uses Level 2 Content Analysis to quantitatively explore stories containing implicit or explicit references to these issues. Level 2 Content Analysis describes the capturing of additional detail for PIE stories only, moving beyond the basic categories, lengths and ordering of stories determined by Level 1 analysis. Thereafter, each issue within the PIE spectrum (wealth, poverty, income inequality and the “squeezed middle”) is examined in terms of key themes, causes, consequences, actions, blames, social actor contributions, the dominant discourses associated with each issue, and the images visually underpinning them.

**Chapter 7** concludes with a synthesised model of the typical coverage of each PIE issue; this is then represented by a series of typical case analyses in **Chapter 8**. Using multimodal analysis to examine how messages are delivered by words and images, this chapter explains that during the financial crisis, poverty coverage for example, moved from Africa to the U.K, increasingly featured individual or specific stories (episodic presentation) and more citizen voices. Imagery remains stereotypical and unimaginative, and the issue was seen as one where the state, rather than the private sector, has agency. Wealth coverage was consistently U.K-based, and almost always episodically presented. There were strong themes of criminality and unethical behaviour, and wealth was typically indexed and described in terms of what it provides, with an emphasis on consumerism. Coverage of the “squeezed middle” was hardly detectable in 2007, but considerable in 2014. Any misdeeds or questionable behaviour within the middle classes was absent, but there is evidence of causality, and a continuing preoccupation with pay and prices. The chapter culminates in an analysis of income inequality coverage, which was often dominated by political framings and hardly ever covered as a standalone issue. In sum, therefore, in terms

of PIE issue coverage, the chapter concludes that citizens are not being served by a broadcasting system that is fundamentally designed to do exactly that.

Driven by a critical realist principle to follow description with explanation, the key empirical findings developed in Chapters 6-8 are then discussed in **Chapter 9**. These are the general convergence of TV news in terms of format and content, but a divergence in terms of style which contributes to the redefining of EBF journalism. The ubiquity of economic growth and lack of challenge to traditional capitalism are also discussed and explained, in addition to the ultimate inadequacy of PIE issue coverage. Finally, **Chapter 10** outlines the impact and contribution of this research, which is to demonstrate that despite its status as a compelling social issue, BBC1 and ITV1 do not really cover or debate income inequality, and that this can be explained by the governance/ownership, commercial motivations, traditions and operational constraints of both channels.

## **Chapter 2. What can we expect from TV news and EBF journalism?**

On the basis that citizen perceptions of EBF news are shaped by TV news coverage, and ahead of quantifying, investigating and explaining ways that EBF and PIE topics are reported, this chapter and the one following discuss what citizens might reasonably expect from the U.K's broadcasting system. Pre and post crisis findings (see Chapter 5 onwards) will then be compared and evaluated against these assumptions and expectations. This chapter examines scholarship and research relating to EBF journalism more generally, with an emphasis on TV coverage. It considers a range of factors shaping EBF news output, ranging from institutional, regulatory and historical influences to more subjective and operational factors. Having established the general landscape of EBF news reporting, Chapter 3 more narrowly focuses on individual PIE elements.

There are many mechanisms influencing TV news coverage, and in order to understand TV news texts, attention must be paid to the context within which they are produced. The news reports themselves are at the heart of this study, and yet the analysis also operates beyond these texts. By examining the detail and composition of news reports by way of content and textual analyses, but then attending to the different objectives of the broadcasters in question, TV news reports can be scrutinised, described, and also explained in terms of institutional, cultural, financial and political influences. In order to present these cohesively, this chapter is structured according to a multilevel model originally proposed by Fairclough (1995), modified by Thomas and Turnbull (2016), and further adapted here (Figure 2.1). This model shows the surrounding and shaping mechanisms driving textual output - EBF and PIE news reports themselves. Fairclough's (1995) model was originally developed for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which examines how text and talk are often ideologically loaded, and present a "selective version of reality" (Thomas and Turnbull 2016, p.6). Here however, this model is adapted to reflect the wider critical investigation of EBF and PIE news reporting.

**Figure 2.1 Organising framework for examining EBF news output.**



Adapted from Thomas and Turnbull (2016, p.8).

The theoretical framework in Figure 2.1 shows influencing factors that operate from the outside and move inwards. The outer layer, or “social and cultural goings on” (Fairclough 1995, p.57), exert influence on the circumstances of text production and the product (text) itself. Together, the outer layer elements embracing ownership, funding, political motivations and deference to elite news sources combine to create the deep, ideological underpinning of these channels, which fashions their approach to news. Collectively these elements are what Murdock and Golding (2005) call the concept of *critical political economy*. The middle layer considers the more operational, regulatory and industrial circumstances within which EBF and PIE news texts are constructed, and also reflects the institutional structures contributing to the process of conception and delivery of news reports. These middle factors include the general protocols adopted within EBF news reporting, the operational ways stories are chosen, and the practical constraints and opportunities associated with EBF news broadcasting in particular. These, in effect, are the operational newsroom and personal possibilities, constraints and traditions that determine news output. Finally, the inner layer attends to the consequence of all these shaping and influencing mechanisms - EBF and PIE news “texts” themselves: how they are constructed, who contributes to them and the range of other characteristics identified by previous research. This chapter considers EBF output, while Chapter 3 attends to PIE news reports.

## **2.1 The “outer layer” factors shaping EBF news.**

The “outer layer” factors working inwards to shape EBF and PIE news are concerned with the ownership, funding, motivations, regulatory constraints, legal obligations and ideological backdrops of the two channels. These are now considered in detail.

### **2.1.1 The theory of critical political economy.**

Political economy is central to how media delivers news. It is defined differently within media studies than in “mainstream economics”, and is often referred to as “critical political economy” (Murdock and Golding 2005, p.61). Critical political economy (CPE) facilitates the examination of how communication products move through “a chain of production and distribution processes and structures before finally getting to the consumer” (Shaw 2015, p.121). Even more broadly, it attends to the “totality of social relations” within “economic, political, social and cultural fields” (Boyd-Barrett 1995, p.186), and is “centrally concerned with the balance between capitalist enterprise and public intervention” (Murdock and Golding 2005, p.61). This tension between serving citizens and generating revenue is addressed by the research sample incorporating the U.K’s main public service broadcaster and its largest commercial rival, reflecting links to capitalism “both through ownership” and “its reliance on advertising” (McChesney 2000, p.3).

Finally, CPE engages with “basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good” (Murdock and Golding 2005, p.61). In this context, this research asks whether EBF and PIE news output serves the public, post crisis, by assisting their understandings of the financial landscape. In sum, EBF and PIE news output is shaped by the interaction between broadcasters and their economic, political and ideological characteristics. News is “economically determined”, performs “an ideological function” and explicitly operates within political realms (Garnham 1995, p.219). This research seeks to interpret media texts via the “real world” causal mechanisms (Fairclough et al. 2004, p.24) that influence them.

Within the wider realm of critical political economy as it relates to media organisations, the “Propaganda Model” (Herman and Chomsky 2002) proposes that news is fashioned by five “filters” which can also be described as a series of editorial decisions. These are ownership/governance and the need for profit, the leverage of advertisers, the availability of sources, the wish to avoid criticism, and an ideological

bias against communism. These filters embrace the key shaping mechanisms associated with critical political economy as it applies to this research, and each is now addressed in turn.

### 2.1.2 The ownership/governance of BBC1 and ITV1 - funding, objectives and obligations.

The prevailing broadcasting system in the U.K is a duopolistic environment (Corner 2010) combining public service broadcasting (PSB) and commercial imperatives. The BBC is a wholly public service broadcaster funded by a licence fee, its output determined by Royal Charter<sup>1</sup>. Founded in 1922 and under Lord Reith's stewardship, the ethos of public service was established through a corporation operating "at arm's length from the government" and placing "public interest" before profit (BBC 2016a).

The Royal Charter - which expires at the end of 2016 - outlines the operational ways in which the public interest should be served, and includes elements such as citizenship, the promotion of learning, and the proper representation of all U.K nations, regions and communities (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2006). In practical terms, this entails a mandate "to enrich people's lives with programmes and services" while being "independent, impartial and honest", putting audiences "at the heart of everything", and taking "pride in delivering quality and value for money" while demonstrating "creativity", "respect" and "diversity" (BBC 2016b). These objectives are often synthesised into Lord Reith's established aims to "inform, educate and entertain" (Debrett 2010, p.34) and in news terms, the setting of the highest possible standards of reporting (Machin 2008, p.60).

Even amid proposed changes to the BBC's governance, bringing the corporation's output under the jurisdiction of Ofcom, in 2016, then Culture Secretary John Whittingdale appeared to recognise the preservation of the iconic Reithian objective as he decreed that the BBC must "act in the public interest, serving all audiences with impartial, high-quality and distinctive media content and services that inform, educate and entertain" (Lawson 2016). This public service imperative, and the attraction of advertising-free programming establish the BBC as the most trustworthy news supplier (Cushion 2012; Plunkett 2016), and the dominant supplier of TV news

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<sup>1</sup> The current Royal Charter can be found here:  
[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/about/how\\_we\\_govern/charter.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/about/how_we_govern/charter.pdf)

(Wayne et al. 2010). Superficially at least, the corporation is “immune from market forces” (Cushion 2012, p.20), with more social, cultural and educational imperatives taking precedence. Therefore, it could be reasonably expected that BBC coverage of EBF and PIE issues will represent the interests of the public.

ITV, in contrast, was established in 1955 as a commercial broadcaster with more limited public service obligations (Cushion 2012). It comprises several independent regional organisations owned by Carlton-Granada and like other commercial broadcasters, must generate value for shareholders (Cushion 2012). ITV seeks to “build a global pay and distribution business” (ITV 2014), and this objective is primarily achieved through advertising (Johnson and Turnock 2005). A basic premise associated with commercially-funded news platforms is that the wider business interests of media owners and sponsors will prevail (McChesney 2000; Herman and Chomsky 2002). Such assumptions are more problematic in the U.K (Shaw 2015), since its broadcasting system combines commercial interests and various degrees of public service obligation (Leiss and Botterill 2005). Nevertheless, the commercial *raison d’être* of ITV is some way removed from that of the BBC.

ITV’s public service regulatory burden is the heaviest among the U.K’s other commercial broadcasters (Cushion et al. 2012). Its output is determined by Ofcom (Barnett 2012), which in return for granting ITV their broadcasting licence stipulates that the channel must not cause offence, must protect children, and must ensure political impartiality as well as provide news, current affairs, educational programmes and so on (Ofcom 2010). Nonetheless, ITV’s key strategy is to “maximise audience and revenue share” (ITV 2014), which means that its political economy has “the profit motive” (Boyd-Barrett 1995, p.186) at the front and centre.

While BBC and ITV differ in terms of their public service obligations, in contrast to the written press, they are legally bound to be impartial (Montgomery 2007). Traditional impartiality, in simple terms, is “balancing both sides of the story” (Cushion 2012, p.45). However, the concept has been redefined as a “wagon wheel”, incorporating “a broader range of perspectives and spectrum of opinion than the more binary ‘see-saw’” (Bridcut, 2007, p.7) which is often evident in political news as a simple left/right contrast. The BBC, in its role as a “fully blown” public service broadcaster, is subject to far greater scrutiny about the impartiality of its news coverage (Cushion



et al. 2016, p.5) and as a consequence, “is regularly under attack from right and left-wing perspectives” (Cushion et al. 2016, p.2). The concept of impartiality is often clouded by the prefix of “due”, which can be interpreted as excusing broadcasters from being impartial within a single story as long as this is achieved over a longer period (McNair 2003). As this study generates empirical data drawn from two years separated by the financial crisis, it is possible to determine whether broadcasters live up to such exacting standards of impartiality.

Ahead of any empirical analysis, with such markedly different objectives, it could be expected that these channels might cover EBF news and PIE news differently. ITV might serve business communities (including their sponsors) and marginalise any wider negative impacts of capitalism, while the BBC might offer a more balanced, socially-conscious approach embracing the interests of the ordinary citizens responsible for funding it.

#### 2.1.3 Advertisers, sources and “flak”—affecting editorial output?

ITV follows a model whereby audiences are sold to advertisers (Smythe 1994; Kendall 2012). The relationship between news platforms and advertisers is a contentious one (see Fahy et al. 2010). It is described as “double-edged sword” - advertising is required for funding but the power of potential sponsors might compromise “editorial integrity” (Butterick 2015, p.7). The issue is especially pertinent in the case of EBF news, since reporting misdeeds, mismanagement and even criminality might be compromised by the need to secure advertising revenue from those who are being reported on. Editorial decisions are often driven by advertisers (see, inter alia, Doyle 2007; Machin and Niblock 2010; Nye 2015; Taylor 2015), and the notion that businesses influence news challenges the principle of a freely-operating media (Winston 1994).

Accordingly, ITV must balance providing EBF news with the fact that the companies it reports on might be current or potential advertisers. Former BBC journalist and later politician Martin Bell claimed although “once a proud name in journalism”, ITV was nonetheless “in hock to the advertisers” (Bell 2002). Bell’s implicit message is that ITV’s need to please advertisers shapes its news output. This influence for example, may take the form of a tendency to report advertisers in positive terms, even when, objectively, the news about them is anything but. An obvious example is ITV’s

coverage of executive remuneration; they might not hold advertisers to account, since those whose pay is being discussed would likely have some influence as to whether ITV should be used as an advertising platform. The licence fee model that funds the BBC, on the other hand, does not contain these channel-advertiser relationship tensions. Since they are funded by the public, a normative expectation of the BBC is that their reporting should serve all interests and demographics.

Another potential shaping factor identified by the “Propaganda Model” is the impact of the sources used to inform the news, and the interaction between journalists and those they report on (Roberts 2015; Taylor 2015). The importance of gaining access to, and building relationships with, for example, important and credible financial sector actors is key, since the information they have is often unavailable elsewhere (Butterick 2015; Tambini 2015; Thompson 2015). While some suggest antagonistic relationships between journalists and commerce (Tiffen 1989; Ericson et al. 1991), the counter argument that these relationships compromise the independent, objective ideals of EBF journalism (Schifferes 2015; Shaw 2015; Thompson 2015) appears more compelling. There are concerns therefore, that these relationships are mutually beneficial when they should be much less comfortable (see, inter alia, Oberlechner and Hockin 2004; Schifferes 2011; Manning 2012; Butterick 2015; DeMartino 2015).

The fourth filter - or news influencer - is the threat of “negative responses” in the form of “letters, telegrams, phone calls, lawsuits, speeches and bills...” or other types of “complaint, threat or punitive action” which prove costly for media organisations (Herman and Chomsky 2002, p.26). For example, in May 2016, when ITV chose UKIP’s Nigel Farage to face Prime Minister David Cameron in a televised debate prior to the in/out EU referendum, the “Vote Leave” campaign issued a press statement claiming that unless Farage was replaced with either Boris Johnson or Michael Gove from the Conservative Party, there would be “consequences for its (ITV’s) future” (Wright 2016). The likelihood of such reactions - known as “flak” (Herman and Chomsky 2002, p.26) - might influence editorial decision making.

#### 2.1.4 Ideological motivations of media, and the perpetuation of ideas.

The governance, traditions and intentions of these channels can be said to create an ideological backdrop. In proposing the existence of anti-communist bias, Herman and Chomsky's (2002) final filter attends to economic and political ideology. Ideology is the development of "political, social and economic relations" into "coherent patterns as a critique of current circumstances and a plan of action for the future" (Windt 1991, p.191). Ideology is often considered as the way that ruling classes perpetuate power and privilege (Richardson 2007), with this power often naturalised or concealed.

The concept of power is central to the study of mass communications (Hartley 2011). More specifically, it is difficult to resist notions that ideological messages developed by the media are promoted by those holding power, rather than by those being suppressed (Van Dijk 1998). For example, if *language* is always ideological and never neutral (Fowler 1991), then ideology is ubiquitously carried by practically every medium. Such language can be mobilised to guide people onto "the desired path" by "sharing one's convictions" (Resche 2004, p.742). While some media texts, like party political broadcasts, are *overtly* ideological, news broadcasts are more subtle in the ways they maintain power dynamics. Much communications research assumes that the media simply reproduces ideology (Blommaert 2001), but despite examples of news content reflecting the specific interests of particular media owners (Jukes 2012; Jones 2014), Fairclough (2003, p.209) advocates more careful "case-by-case" examination. This guides the analysis that follows (Chapters 5-8), where themes and trends are firstly identified, quantified, and then qualitatively examined.

Suggestions that ideology is a pejorative concept only ever possessed by others (Eagleton 1991; Leonardo 2004) may be too unyielding for an examination of contemporary and multi-dimensional news-making. All-embracing definitions of ideology might be a useful starting point, but in reality may be too simplistic. For example, superficially, two TV news providers (BBC and ITV) with fundamentally different objective aims are likely to demonstrate different ideologies. When covering poverty, income inequality and so on, the BBC's public service obligations might be expected to provide the public (who fund it) with wider discussions about capitalism and its variances. The funding of a commercial channel like ITV on the other hand, actually relies heavily on the capitalist system, and the channel might be

reasonably expected to produce content that does not challenge or criticise such a system.

However, this binary model cannot be simply adopted as a working assumption ahead of empirical study. In reality, the line dividing commercial logics and public service logics is less clearly defined. Despite their mainly commercial objective for example, ITV is still obliged to adhere to the regulatory requirements of public service and the legal requirements of impartiality (Cushion 2015). The BBC on the other hand, with its greater obligation to public service, is not completely free of commercial interests (Harcourt 2005), and generates some of its own revenue by selling its programmes globally (Franklin 2001; Sweney 2015a).

Furthermore, ideological loadings might not be confined to single news events, and instead might be less obvious agents, developing over time. Considering news output between two points (2007 and 2014) enables the detection of such ideology, the journalistic trends and recurring discourses associated with EBF and PIE issues, and the social actors developing them.

#### 2.1.5 EBF news ideology in focus: the Keynesianism / neoliberalism continuum.

The manifestation of ideology in EBF journalism will likely sit between the two extremes of Keynesian and neoliberal economic theories. According to Keynesianism, governments should intervene to stimulate economies (Butterick 2015; Shaw 2015), providing “state-sponsored redistribution” (Gintis and Bowles 1982, p.341) and “a compromise between capital and labour” where “the interest of both sides would be jointly upheld” (Ciddi 2009, p.135).

Keynesianism however, is often considered by many on the political right to be outmoded, unfashionable and no longer credible (Farrell and Quiggin 2011; Butterick 2015; Shaw 2015). Herman and Chomsky (2002) describe the ideological underpinning of American media as being anti-communist, but this seems outdated and unwieldy for a U.K context. Rather than “anti-communist” motives, a more appropriate description of modern media organisations might be “pro-capitalist”. There were signs, even before WWI, that market logics and the promotion of growth and prosperity prevailed over political will, and *Financial Times* editor Ellis Powell (in Parsons 1989, p.43) asserted that despite perceptions that collective “destinies”

were in political hands, “financial and economic forces have become the predominant factors... while the political elements have receded into second place”.

In its broadest form, “the guiding assumption of every neoliberal community of ideas” is that “human flourishing in life *in general* requires that one particular domain of life should *rule*” (Glendinning 2015, original emphasis). Accordingly, neoliberalism dominates Europe (Orenstein 2013; Schmidt and Woll 2013); it favours individualism and competition (Tabb 2003), restoring hegemony to capitalism by removing state interference (Schmidt 2000) and emphasising market dominance (Erjavec et al. 2008). Economies, it is claimed, will prosper when the state recedes since it “is believed to leave more space for private initiative and inspire confidence” (Schui 2014, p.2). Considered resilient and unflinching (see Du Gay and Morgan 2013; Schmidt and Thatcher 2013), neoliberalism is advocated by many as the system most able to navigate modern economies through recession (see De Ville and Orbie 2014), promising “the sunny uplands of the future” (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, p.30).

One way that either of these ideological extremes can be identified within EBF and PIE news discourse is by establishing which arguments and positions are preferred by which social actors. For example, the defence of free markets consistent with neoliberalism might be the championing of growth, wealth and prosperity (see, inter alia, Solomon 2001; McChesney 2003; Tambini 2010; BBC 2012; Berry 2013; Barber 2015; Lewis and Thomas 2015), and the prevalence of pro-business views (Schiffrin and Fagan 2012). In contrast, more labour-centred arguments that regulated markets protect workforces, and others defending the welfare state may feature trade unions, activists or charity representatives. The promotion of either ideological position is developed through a combination of reporter or other commentary, graphics, visual settings and so on.

This continuum embracing interventionist policies or the more laissez-faire regime of the free markets is key to EBF and PIE issue reporting. Arguments can be made that poverty, the squeezing of the middle class and income inequality can be addressed by the actions of either the private sector (for example through higher wages and improved employment conditions), or the state (through for example, taxation and benefits). This discussion now moves to the middle layer outlined in Figure 2.1.

## **2.2 The “middle layer” factors shaping EBF news.**

The “middle layer” factors influencing EBF and PIE news concern the general protocols adopted within EBF news reporting, the operational ways that stories are chosen, the relevant journalistic trends and practical constraints and opportunities. While the institutional ideology and approach of each channel is placed in the overarching outer layer of the three layered model (see Figure 2.1), these institutional factors are also present in the middle layer in the form of the professional and organisational procedures, norms and processes involved in the selection and shaping of news reports.

### **2.2.1 Normative expectations of news, and EBF/PIE news more specifically.**

In the widest context, the media is important and necessary within a process where action follows public opinion (Sartori 1987). One popular notion is that journalists seek the truth (Machin 2008), but that this truth might be elusive. More pragmatically, Watergate journalist Carl Bernstein advocates that news should reflect “the best available version of the truth” (Rusbridger 2011). Normative models of “watchdog” journalism, therefore, advocate critical and objective reporting (McQuail 1987; Kovach and Rosentiel 2007), and that journalism should function as the “fourth estate” alongside legislative, religious and legal systems (Kinsey 2005). Such an undertaking is made on the basis that businesspeople and politicians are powerful figures who should be held to account (Kalegeropoulos et al. 2015).

Such aspirations however, may be problematic when news organisations must balance normative ideals with commercial imperatives and increasingly fickle audiences (McKendrick et al. 2008). Media ownership is increasingly concentrated into fewer and fewer private hands, hampering such watchdog ideals (Curran 2011), and also restricting choice.

Turning to EBF news in particular, the sheer volume of financial information available (Schiffes 2011) has increased the complexity of the average person’s financial affairs. This presents new opportunities for EBF journalism (Saporito 1999), as the apparent failure of the prevailing economic system provides grounds for it to be strongly challenged. Idealistic objectives for EBF journalists indicate that they should be “trusted allies” for citizens (Schiffes and Coulter 2012, p.2) and that they should “untangle the complicated” (Seymour 2009, p.8). Peter Jay of *The Times* (in Roberts

2015, p.253) outlined a general *raison d'être* for the discipline, advocating that it should provide economic insight into “such things as prices, output, employment, balance of payments, the world of economic environment” and “monetary conditions”.

In addition, Jay proposed that the EBF specialism should provide interpretation and comment beyond that offered by academics and economists. EBF journalism in the U.K does not have the same investigative thrust as it does in the U.S (Schifferes and Knowles 2015, Tambini 2015), but nevertheless, it still involves uncovering the truth (see Taylor 2015). Objectives for EBF journalism centre around the needs of large commercial organisations, incorporating the provision of a “sphere through which the corporate world prefers to interact with society”, somewhere they can receive “legitimation and validation” (Butterick 2015, p.xi) or simply supply information so that audiences can become successful speculators (German 2000). Most compellingly of all however, EBF journalism should serve citizens with clarifying, accurate and objective reporting.

### 2.2.2 The possibilities and scope of TV news.

The easy credit culture implied by programmes such as *Escape to the Country*, *A Place to the Sun* and *Location, Location, Location*<sup>2</sup> can be considered complicit in increasing levels of personal debt (Schifferes 2011). It is, however, the fact-based genre of TV news that citizens expect to inform them about EBF and PIE issues.

Even despite technological advances providing more choices when consuming news, TV retains its pre-eminence (Lewis 2013b). TV is the most popular news platform in the U.K (Ofcom 2015), in addition to being of strategic, ritual and iconic significance. Furthermore, *viewers* are considered less discerning than *readers* (Belk and Kozinets 2005), and since TV contains the most focused of news agendas (Hanley 2009) and incorporate the time constraints inherent in fixed time bulletins (McCombs and Shaw 1972), these bulletins can be said to be the most influential news medium. The Ethiopian famine in the early 1980s is exemplar of how TV news can seize public attention. Singer Bob Geldof was among those affected by a BBC news report,

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<sup>2</sup> These are all entertainment programmes regularly screened in the U.K. The format involves an individual, couple or family attempting to sell their existing home and the programme presenter showcasing a number of relocation possibilities.

recalling that “it was clear that this was a horror on a monumental scale... I felt disgusted, enraged and outraged...” (Geldof 1986, pp.269-271). As a direct result, Geldof created Live Aid to spearhead the humanitarian relief effort.

Television also delivers messages that can be understood irrespective of literacy levels (Morgan and Signorielli 1990). Therefore, news *imagery* is important (Graber 1990; Gilens 1996). Video maximises news producer intentions (Tuchman 1978) and viewers find images “highly salient” (Gilens 1996, p.528), to an extent that they can “take precedence over the story itself” (Robinson et al. 2009, p.15). Paradoxically, therefore, TV both pacifies and heightens public consciousness (Perucci and Wysong 2008). Furthermore, video images reveal “warts and all” texturing to enhance verbal discourse (Deacon et al. 2007, p.226), and business news in particular offers attractive opportunities for a multimodal platform such as television (Saporito 1999). Figure 2.2 shows an example of how visual data enhances spoken commentary during EBF reporting. In a SKY report from 3/7/12, reporter Martin Stanford describes the pay of Barclays’ Bob Diamond alongside a moving graphic showing an ATM machine continually dispensing banknotes. The clear inference, delivered through visual means, is that banking is characterised by limitless remuneration.

**Figure 2.2 Images of executive remuneration: a never-ending flow of cash.**



Another paradox in contemporary TV news reporting is that it is obliged to be more impartial than the written press (Montgomery, 2007), yet it provides opportunities for strong emotion within presentations and the responses to them (Pounds 2012).



However, by positioning items in news or editorial sections, differentiating fact from opinion is much easier for print journalists than those working in TV news (Pounds 2012).

Despite normative suggestions that journalism should be objective and “cool” (see Schudson 2001), emotion can be relayed verbally using lexical choices and voice intonation (Thomas 2016), and non-verbal means such as facial expression, gestures and body language (Pounds 2012). It is claimed, for example, that Robert Peston’s “excitable” tone reporting the Northern Rock bailout in 2007 might have instigated panic (Hulbert 2015, p.281). If, as Pounds (2012) suggests, emotional reaction is equally significant as fact, the emotional reaction of news, incorporating body language, gestures and facial expression might also be indicative of falling journalistic standards and tabloidization (Pantti 2010), where news is reduced to a less serious (soft) level. In sum, TV news presents multimodal possibilities and opportunities to present all news, including news about EBF and PIE issues, in high impact forms that potentially influence the opinions of millions of people.

### 2.2.3 The personal and institutional process of news selection.

A key operational process shaping EBF news output across all media platforms is story selection. If TV is influential, then this can be achieved through the stories it features, and those it chooses to omit. While what is present has influence, those stories that are not mentioned may be not considered worthy of scrutiny, and viewers/readers may not raise questions about “something that is not even there” (Huckin 1997, p.82). The selection of news stories considers the relationship between journalists and audiences, and whether news caters to the preferences of those watching it, or whether journalists and editors present news irrespective of demand.

An early study of news output found individual prejudices had significant influence on which stories were and were not reported (White 1950). Such idiosyncratic decision-making is exemplified by a news editor selecting the day’s news agenda on the basis of ““what do I fancy today?”” (McKendrick et al. 2008, p.41). Consequently, the types of people populating newsrooms may have some bearing on output as they bring personal opinions and whims to this process. Accordingly, there are concerns that journalists are drawn from elite demographics (Journalism Training Forum 2002; Edwards and Cromwell 2009; Merrill 2012; Butterick 2015), and that unpaid

internships supplying the media industry preclude all but the wealthy (Dennis 2013; O'Neill 2013; Paton 2014). Put simply, the profession has become increasingly "white collar", and this more "privileged" approach may impact story selection, with ideology interacting with idiosyncrasy as journalists are often less able - or prepared - to understand, for example, socio-economic approaches different to their own. It is reasonable to assume that in addition to more institutional editorial decision-making, BBC and ITV will be driven by personal preferences and operational norms.

On a wider professional level, the story characteristics that news producers anticipate viewers will find most attractive are known as "news values". News value theory places audience preference at the heart of the editorial process, and news values can be summarised as those elements journalists consider as congruent with public interest (McCall 2013). In practice, they are an unwritten, notional taxonomy of editorial selection criteria originally proposed by Galtung and Ruge (1965) and since refashioned (see, for example Watson 1998; Harcup and O'Neil 2001; Harrison 2006).

In general, news value theory suggests that stories are more likely to be covered if they contain elite nations or events, elements of personalisation and negativity, are clearly defined, have high impact affecting a large number of people, and so on. Some stories it suggests, will be omitted unless they include a crescendo or crisis, like perhaps, the financial crisis. Stories with "a semblance of novelty" are also more likely to be included (Sorenson 1991, p.225), and while personality, sensationalism and conflict are emphasised, wider social, economic, or political implications are marginalised (Callaghan and Schnell 2001).

Moreover, individual journalists may devise their own criteria to attract editors (Hetherington 1985), and journalism is also defined in terms of "a set of culturally negotiated professional values and conventions that operate mostly behind the backs of individual journalists" (Hanitzsch et al. 2011, p.273). Such cultures include decisions about zeitgeist issues or others resonating with the "climate of opinion" (Epstein 1973). Personal paradigms may vary, but elements such as negativity, shock, drama and subject matter evoking public empathy (McKendrick et al. 2008) are all likely to interest editors deciding what stories should be screened. As "fluent, intelligible versions of the world" (Montgomery 2007, p.20) however, TV news is

different from the written press in that it does not, out of necessity, separate space and time but can simultaneously transmit “live” action (Montgomery 2007). Consequently, and aside even from the obvious difference in the range of news that can be covered (Hanley 2009), some stories are not considered as suitable for TV news (White 2005). Harrison (2006) stylises previously-established news values to more closely reflect TV news selection, suggesting that stories are more likely to appear on TV if...

- Events are large scale, and pictures and film are available.
- There are short occurrences that can be dramatized.
- The issue can be presented simply and contains novelty.
- Events are negative and violent, criminal, conflicting or catastrophic.
- Events are unexpected but meaningful, and already evident within news agendas.
- The story provides bulletin balance.
- The story contains elite nations or people, and/or personal or human interests are included.

In sum, for stories to appear on TV, they must be dramatic, emotional (see Kaniss 1993, Underwood 1998; Allern 2002; Meyer 2003) and visual (Hetherington 1985). The concept of news values within EBF and PIE realms is not appreciably different (Tumber 1999). For example, poverty and inequality affect many people, are negative, ongoing and contain inherent potential for binary comparison. Wealth for example, embraces elements of elitism, while the sheer scale and sums of money involved in some remuneration stories make them compelling (Butterick 2015). Amid the many extraordinary events associated with the financial crisis, news value theory facilitates the unpacking and analysis of news stories. Further, by considering the presence of these elements and the differences between “hard” (more serious) and “soft” (more trivial) news, news value theory enables some conclusions as to whether these stories have been chosen according to public service logics or commercial imperatives.

Taking a sacerdotal approach, editors might perceive certain news as essential for democracy (Semetko et al. 1991; Picard and Salgado 2015). While this may be a consideration for public service broadcasters such as the BBC, a more pragmatic approach - evaluating stories in terms of their attractiveness and appeal (Blumler and

Gurevitch 1987; Picard and Salgado 2015) - may appear more pertinent to commercial stations. Economic and financial events such as interest rate fluctuations, bank bailouts, large remuneration awards or announcements of growth are standalone and newsworthy, but despite their omnipresence, the “slow burn” nature of PIE issues might mean they lack obvious and compelling news values. For example, and as explained in Chapter 3, income inequality is consequent of a wide range of political and socio-economic factors, and develops over decades.

Finding newsworthy events within slow moving themes resonates with the “burglar alarm” standard of reporting (Zaller 2003). Adapting a model developed by McCubbins and Schwartz (1984), Zaller (2003, p.112) proposes that news should comprise of attention-catching information about “acute problems” rather than “police patrol” coverage providing routine reporting about issues posing no immediate danger. This model advocates highlighting issues in “excited and noisy tones” at regular intervals, rather than more muted, continuous coverage (Zaller 2003, p.122). This, proposes Zaller (2003), attracts the attention of “monitorial citizens” who are sufficiently informed to recognise important societal issues, and in order to become acquainted with these issues, absorb information about many issues on a superficial level (Schudson 1998). Instead of supporting intensive, relentless dissemination of information, the “burglar alarm” model represents climactic coverage, enabling citizens to acquire information with less effort, their attention grabbed by “alarms” rather than the “slow burn” routines of “general patrols” (Zaller 2003, p.119).

Although these wide-ranging social issues might be better addressed by longer format genres such as documentaries which elicit more “compelling emotional response” (Scott 2013, p.13), “burglar alarm” coverage offers a “workable and yet normatively defensible standard for popular news” (Zaller 2003, p.127). The extraordinary behaviour, practices and remuneration of some banking sector actors for example, can be conceptualised as “burglar alarm” opportunities to discuss broader themes within the banking system (Tumber 1993). In particular, the personalisation of events is “essential” to news narratives (Puustinen et al. 2015, p.99). For example, previously revered, bankers became “widely detested” (Whittle

and Mueller 2012, p. 112) and “greedy” (Joutsenvirta 2013)<sup>3</sup>. Alongside this potential refashioning of some elements of EBF journalism, it is possible that post-crisis, reporting may have become more sensational, simplified or “dumbed down”. Shaw (2015) for example, describes that while the more complex subprime mortgage crisis was downplayed by some media, the less ambiguous horsemeat scandal of 2013 was escalated and emphasised in more alarmist ways. Some decry blending news with entertainment and simplification (Jensen 1979; Franklin 1997; Doyle 2007), while others (see Langer 1998; Marr 2004; Temple 2006) contend that simplifying news is necessary to engage wider audiences. The lack of “burglar alarm” coverage might explain why developing scandals such as Enron, for example, went unnoticed. However, one criticism of “burglar alarm” coverage of on-going issues such as poverty and income inequality is that when such coverage ends, viewers may think that the issue has been reduced or even solved.

#### 2.2.4 Framing: Presenting EBF and PIE news stories once they have been chosen.

Within the operational news construction process addressed by the middle layer of the model shown in Figure 2.1, once stories have been chosen, editors and journalists face further choices when deciding how they are packaged and presented to audiences. Inequality for example, might be described as a pejorative phenomenon that should be reduced, or as an acceptable by-product of capitalism.

News editors make decisions about how such stories are presented (Reese 2007). Aside from the number and type of sources and so on, another major decision concerns how stories should be “framed”. News story “framing” has been widely researched (McCall 2013; Xu 2013) and is key within communication studies (Goffman 1975; Iyengar 1990). It can be understood as a process comprising of “individual” and “media” frames (Scheufele 1999; Sabir and Rasul 2011). Individual frames are mental clusters of knowledge determining how individuals process information (McLeod et al. 1987; Kinder and Sanders 1990; Conaway 1996). Media frames however, are the ways of organising information (see Tuchman 1978),

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of literature about the banking crisis especially critical of the sector include *Making It Happen: Fred Goodwin, RBS and the men who blew up the British economy* (Martin 2013) and *Bad Banks: Greed, Incompetence and the Next Global Crisis* (Brummer 2014).

drawing out the “central organizing idea or story line”, and providing the story’s “essence” (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, p.143).

When framing stories, journalists and editors use words, sources and images (McLeod and Detenber 1999), highlighting salience and promoting one line of interpretation or the interests of some groups, while marginalising others (see, inter alia, Tuchman 1978; Entman 1993; 2007; Terkildsen et al. 1998; Hannah and Cafferty 2006; Reese 2007; Kim et al. 2010). In turn, these will influence audience perceptions (McCombs et al. 1997; Callaghan and Schnell 2001) or “individual” frames. For example, corporate profits might appear considerable when presented in isolation, but when compared to a competitor’s returns might seem less impressive (Butterick 2015). Frames function to define issues, propose causality, evaluate and advocate solutions (Entman 1993); Level 2 Content Analysis specifically examines the presence of these elements within PIE issues coverage (see Chapter 7).

Wider discussions regarding the cause and effect of poverty often depend on whether the issue is framed episodically or thematically (see Chapter 2). Thematic framings describe general trends including quantification, geographic differences, changes and so on; such general coverage may involve graphics, statistics, and wider explanations (Iyengar 1990). While thematic frames more often refer to causality, statistics are often difficult to understand (Dorling 2011), and such presentation can be impersonal (Kendall 2012). In contrast, episodic framings describe poverty “in terms of personal experience”, where “the viewer is provided with a particular instance of an individual or family living under economic duress” (Iyengar 1990, p.21). Consequently, a focus on those with personal experience of poverty is often the most effective means of engaging wider audiences (Duffy and Pierce 2007; Delvaux and Rinne 2009; Robinson et al. 2009). More negatively, episodic framings can simplify issues to the level of “anecdote” (Iyengar 1990), or a “fleeting parade of events” (Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2010, p.493), meaning that understandings of issues are “disorganized, and isolated” (De Vreese 2003, p.38).

Iyengar (1990, p.21) suggests that TV news is “inherently episodic” or “event-oriented”, focusing on “concrete acts” or “live” events at the expense of “general contextual material”. In contrast to research findings that thematic framings are more frequent (Hannah and Cafferty 2006), the more compelling argument is that in TV news, episodic framings are more common than thematic ones (Iyengar 1990),

consistent with ideas that human stories are more interesting for audiences than social causes (McKendrick et al. 2008). In contrast, simplifying complex issues might ignore wider context, with policy solutions ignored (Callaghan and Schnell 2001); moreover, episodic framings inevitably promote some elements of reality, while others are omitted (Kim et al. 2010).

Framing choices are also important since public perceptions of “causes and cures” are thought to be dependent on TV news frames (Iyengar 1990). For example, while governments might be held responsible within stories presented thematically, episodic frames engender more individual attribution (Iyengar 1990; Kendall 2012). Such outcomes inevitably shape private sector and policymaker actions, since there is “virtually no aspect of life in which attribution of causal responsibility does not significantly influence attitudes and behaviours” (Iyengar 1990, p.23). Further, “game” frames are often present in political stories (Aalberg et al. 2012), meaning *process* takes preference over *policy*. Beyond politics, “game” frames involve “media logics” embracing elements including “dramatization, conflict and personalization” (Olsson and Nord 2015, p.346). Once Level 1 and 2 Content Analyses determine what sort of news is reported and whether episodic or thematic frames are preferred, qualitative analysis explores how, and by whom these news frames are developed.

#### 2.2.5 Other trends and challenges that shape EBF and PIE news output.

There are other mechanisms influencing EBF journalism within the “middle layer” outlined in Figure 2.1. These incorporate operational, institutional and ethical challenges (Doyle 2007; Manning 2012). According to Harrison (2006), news is selected according to the organisational constraints of those choosing it. First, corporate misdeeds might only be revealed through investigative journalism, but this specialism is considered to be in decline as redundancies, budget cuts and changing editorial approaches all determine news output (Tunstall 1996; Barnett and Seymour 1999). Newspapers and bulletins must be delivered by fewer journalists (Sommers 2014)<sup>4</sup>, and alongside such staffing cuts, less general resources and higher workloads (L’Etang 2004; Murdock 2015) might also partly explain why the most recent financial crisis was not anticipated (Butterick 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> Sommers reports that in an attempt to save £48 million by 2016, the BBC announced a net loss of 225 jobs in BBC News and Current Affairs.

As a consequence, the deficit in journalist-generated news copy is countered by using information subsidies provided by “powerful media experts” in the Public Relations (PR) sector (Hulbert 2015, p.284), who set corporate agendas and determine the availability of sources (Davis 2000; Fahy et al. 2010; Butterick 2015). PR has grown considerably (Tumber 1993; Tunstall 1996; Davis 2002) and professionally-presented stories from corporate communications departments are increasingly replacing independent, journalist-sourced content (Lewis et al. 2006; Schifferes 2011). Professional PR teams skilfully “manage” journalists into positive, or at least neutral discourses when the news is generally bad (Butterick 2015, p.96). A vicious circle is completed as time pressures mean journalists cannot verify corporate information so rigorously (Oberlechner and Hockin 2004; Schifferes 2011; Tambini 2015). As they change from “hunter gatherers” of stories to “data processors” (Butterick 2015, p.113), journalists, therefore, rely increasingly on PR.

Even as far back as 2008, before budget cuts and redundancies within media organisations had taken such a serious grip, Lewis et al. (2008, p.10) found that “52 per cent of broadcast news items contain PR materials”, noting that their findings could be even more startling, since PR influence was suspected in more stories but could not be verified. As well as competing with the influence of PR, mainstream journalists also face other contemporary challenges, such as ensuring their adherence to stringent U.K libel laws (McChesney 2003; Taylor 2015), and competitive pressures from non-professional bloggers (Tambini 2015).

Furthermore, given the complexity of EBF affairs (Doyle 2007; Tambini 2015; Schifferes 2015; Davis 2015), there are concerns that journalists lack professional competencies, knowledge and training (see, inter alia, Davis, 2007; Schifferes 2011; Schiffrin and Fagan 2012; Butterick 2015). In practice, this might manifest itself as an inability to accurately or clearly present data (Poynter Institute 1998; Maier 2002), or a failure to challenge stories beyond superficial levels (Doyle 2007). As large news providers, BBC and ITV will be inevitably affected by all such trends and professional norms and/or deficiencies.

### **2.3 The “inner layer” - EBF news texts.**

The outer layers in the organising framework shown in Figure 2.1 consider the wider governance and ideological influencers of EBF news texts. What emerges from this



shaping process are EBF and PIE news texts themselves. The final, inner layer therefore, attends to EBF and PIE<sup>5</sup> reporting, and what follows is an examination of the themes, trends and conventions as determined by scholarly research. These provide a series of expectations for what might be revealed by the quantitative and qualitative analysis outlined in Chapters 5-8.

### 2.3.1 Serving which masters? A critique of contemporary EBF journalism.

As might be expected from the examination of influencing mechanisms within the outer and middle layers in Figure 2.1, the inevitable conclusion drawn from research into EBF journalism is that it fails to meet normative expectations. Although until comparatively recently an infrequent site for academic inquiry (Butterick 2015), several financial crises have intensified the scrutiny of EBF journalism. Criticism of the discipline is well established (Schifferes and Coulter 2012; Tambini 2015), but often seems based on anecdotal intuition (Shaw 2015) rather than systematic empirical work. More recently, concerns regarding EBF journalism have been regularly outlined (see for example, McChesney 2003; Butterick 2015; Shaw 2015; Tambini 2015; Taylor 2015).

Aside from playful suggestions that Joseph warning the Pharaohs about “agricultural depression” was the first example of financial punditry (Parsons 1989, p.11), the consensus is that financial journalism began in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries with the distribution of mercantile trade information (Parsons 1989; Winston 1994; Starkman 2014). A banking family - the Fuggers of Augsburg – were the first to trade economic data (Parsons 1989; Bakker 2015; Butterick 2015; Shaw 2015). The profession was further developed by John Castaing (Butterick 2015), and by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, EBF reporting was responsible for shaping “economic attitudes” (Parsons 1989, p.18). Eminent journalists such as Alsager (see Butterick 2015; Taylor 2015) and Bagehot (see Schifferes 2011; Butterick 2015; Shaw 2015) advanced the specialism by raising standards of reporting and knowledge. By WWII, EBF journalism was increasingly professionalised (Butterick 2015), and post war, the volume and choice of EBF news increased, with specialist titles growing alongside mainstream titles containing business sections. Broadcast coverage however, was infrequent apart from during times of crisis (Roberts 2015). The traditions of EBF reporting are rooted

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<sup>5</sup> Coverage of PIE issues is examined in Chapter 3.

in print journalism, and this format must be considered as an influencing mechanism as EBF journalism transitioned into broadcasting.

EBF news audiences have become increasingly mainstream, since events more obviously attract wider audiences as they embrace conflict and the human elements of corporate life (Doyle 2007; Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2013). Contemporary news landscapes therefore, are willing platforms for EBF news, as the specialism moves from “Wall Street” to “Main Street” (Joutsenvirta 2013, p.474; Bromley 2015). Chakravartty and Schiller (2010; p.685) report the “sheer ubiquity of financial news and infotainment since the 1990s”, and this popularising of EBF news is driven “by the need for individuals to know more about their own financial situation as they are being required to take more responsibility for it” (Schifferes 2011).

EBF reporting is an especially important specialism, since journalists can influence the stories they report (see, inter alia, Tambini 2010; Engleberg and Parsons 2011; Manning 2012; Casarin and Squazzoni 2013; Shaw 2015). For example, volatile markets may be influenced (Thompson 2015), and the central dilemma - notably faced by Robert Peston when reporting the Northern Rock bail out (Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2013) - is to balance the professional duty of reporting the news with the impact of that duty on citizens, investors, employers and markets (Tambini 2015). Peston’s initial reporting on Northern Rock for example, is often seen as instigating the “run on the bank” that followed (Hulbert 2015).

Some EBF journalist practitioners see their role as wholly market-serving, with no discernible ethical or social obligations other than remaining within the law (Shaw 2015; Tambini 2015). EBF journalist Peter Jay for example, once said that his writing was for the benefit of three people, two of whom worked in the Treasury (Schifferes 2011). Such comments define target audiences as narrow and elite (Davis 2000; McChesney 2003; Doyle 2007; Tambini 2015). The contemporary challenge however, is to satisfy two discrete audiences - one with specialist knowledge, and another simply wishing to better understand their own financial affairs (BBC 2012).

Within a commercial media model reliant on advertising, news organisations might cater for a powerful, high income demographic (see Baron 2006). In contrast, Shaw (2015) suggests that EBF journalism should be redefined as “public business journalism” attending to a much wider demographic. While much of the U.K’s media

remains in private hands, this is difficult to conceive. However, and while the appetite for EBF news is greater and wider, new types of audience engagement might be required. Serving this audience is compounded by lower levels of financial literacy; despite Gillian Tett's cautious advocacy for example, the *Financial Times* "could not find a way of translating her specialist knowledge into a front-page story" (Fay 2011, p.53). In sum, traditional financial stories are often dry, and lack elements likely to excite and engage audiences (Shaw 2015); non-specialist audiences therefore, may require a different style of EBF news presentation (Thomson 1998).

Audiences must be able to trust EBF journalists. On the BBC especially, since citizens fund its operations, those operations should reflect wider public interests. While trust is explicitly described as fundamental for titles such as the *Financial Times* (Lambert 1998; Butterick 2015), confidence in journalists has declined alongside that for politicians and corporate figures, especially bankers (Schifferes 2015). The deficit of trust is fuelled by scandals such as the "city slicker" case (Tambini 2010, Butterick 2015), when journalists were accused of tipping shares and inflating their value for personal benefit. Pertinently here, Schifferes (2015) finds that generically, broadcast EBF news is even less trusted than other media, perhaps surprising given that in the U.K, TV news has additional obligations of impartiality.

One major concern is that in exchange for information, interviews and access, business sources implicitly, or even explicitly, expect positively spun stories on a "quid pro quo" basis (Tambini 2015, p.123). Accordingly, relationships between journalists and their sources are variously described as "symbiotic, incestuous" and "Machiavellian" (Nye 2015, p.215). Throughout Parsons' (1989) useful history of EBF reporting, it is clear that even the earliest EBF journalists served business communities rather than wider readerships, and generally functioned as carriers of raw data, lacking mass appeal (see also Taylor 2015).

Accordingly, a "merger between the media and the political/business classes" is thought to create "a cosy network" (Fay 2011, p.52). *The Guardian's* Simon Jenkins (cited in Hulbert 2015, p.286) explains that relationships between EBF journalists and their sources are similar to those between political journalists and politicians, and are so unhealthy that "mishaps" are unsurprising. The dilemma facing EBF journalists is that "burning" one's sources apparently hampers their ability to function (Barber 2015, p.xxv). Where media are commercially commandeered and choice is limited,

there are claims that elite interests are perpetuated and inequalities are promoted (Davis 2003; Petrova 2008), and that instead of holding business to account, journalists are “safe conduits” to disseminate positive corporate information (Butterick 2015, p.91). This is a point that is perhaps amplified further by the reduction in investigative journalism. The qualitative analysis in Chapters 6 and 8 examines contributors to EBF and PIE reports, and the language and presentation that they use.

In practice, acquiescing to business and investor communities is demonstrated by the limited coverage of labour markets and workforces (Chakravartty and Schiller 2010; Butterick 2015), and the regular and narrow use of stock markets to index “business” (Devereux 1998). Statistically-driven news reflects the interests of businesses themselves (Lewis 2013a), and is prone to deliver advice and gossip rather than critical analysis (Curran 1978). Moreover, which statistics are featured and how they are presented might also be problematic (Wren-Lewis 2015).

Often chosen because of their ability to “perform” on TV or radio, financial analysts are frequent contributors to business news (BBC 2012). Risks to objectivity and accuracy are intensified by suggestions that sources may compete for media exposure (Thompson 2015), realising that their appearances enhance and consolidate reputations (Saporito 1999; Fay 2011). The motives of sources, therefore, might be more problematic than the straightforward dissemination of fact and comment, and often the only available “experts” may have vested corporate interests (Doyle 2007; Chakravartty and Schiller 2010; Tambini 2015; Butterick 2015). Further, Chakravartty and Schiller (2010, p.684) point out that “the business media have helped transform captains of industry as acceptable experts and public intellectuals” on a range of “economic or social” issues.

The symbiotic nature of the relationship between the media and the corporate world is fundamental to the central concern that EBF journalism is insufficiently probing (Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2013; Shaw 2015). During financial crises, EBF news is especially important (Anderson 2004; Kjær and Slaatta 2007), but it is considered to have failed to anticipate, for example, the Wall Street Crash of 1929 (Barber 2015; Roberts 2015) and more recently, other corporate collapses (see, inter alia, Dyck and Zingales 2002; Madrick 2003; Doyle 2007; Manning 2012; Murdock 2015). As for the recent financial crisis, “when business and finance became the best story in the world, almost every

business journalist missed it” (Fay 2011, p.53). Consequently, normative models of “watchdog” journalism<sup>6</sup> are compromised (see, inter alia, Starkman 2014; Butterick 2015; Schifferes 2015; Tambini 2015).

One explanation for such ineffectual reporting is that when the economic outlook is good, caution is unfashionable (Barber 2015; Tambini 2015). While this might explain the indolence of some EBF journalists, other practitioners are resolutely critical (Butterick 2015), and retain “the capacity to be canaries in the mine” (Barber 2015, p. xxviii). Gillian Tett of the *Financial Times* for example, is oft-quoted as exemplar of more pragmatic reporters (see, inter alia, Fay 2011; Barber 2015; Schifferes and Knowles 2015; Thompson 2015), and was expressing concern well before the 2008 crisis. While much EBF journalism does not sufficiently probe and investigate, it cannot be simply generalised as indolent.

However, amid claims that EBF journalism is mostly negative (Dominick 1981; Carroll 2004), the compelling discourse is that it is elite-driven (Schifferes 2011; Davis 2015), irrespective of the nature of the wider political backdrop (Schifferes and Knowles 2015; Walsh 2015).

### 2.3.2 A narrower focus: the EBF news tradition of BBC and ITV.

ITV1 and BBC1 are the two most trusted broadcasters of EBF news (Eaton 2012<sup>7</sup>; Higgins 2015; Schifferes 2015). When first introduced, ITV/ITN news offered a fresh alternative to the more formal BBC (Marr 2004; Barnett 2012; Cushion 2015; Higgins 2015). This manifested itself as an increase in reporter involvement (Marr 2004; Barnett 2012) and the introduction of male and female anchoring duos (Marr 2004; Montgomery 2007; Cushion 2012). Editorially, ITV traditionally follows a lighter news agenda, complementing hard news with elements often found in mid-market newspapers (Barnett 2012). ITV can therefore be summarised as consumer-driven, populist and mainstream (Barnett 2012; Cushion 2012).

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<sup>6</sup> Continuing the canine metaphor, *Forbes* magazine states that regarding Enron, journalism was “the dog that didn’t bark” (Roush 2011, p.3) and was “lapdog not watchdog” (Schifferes 2015, p.164; see also Starkman 2014; Butterick 2015).

<sup>7</sup>Eaton (2012) reports the *YouGov* poll, where 44% of respondents believed BBC journalists told the truth. ITV were a close second, with 41%. These values are higher than those expressed in “upmarket” newspapers (38%), and notably higher than the trust expressed in mid-range (18%) and tabloid newspapers (10%).

BBC's news ethos, on the other hand, can be described thus:

*Free from commercial interests, lacking the baser instincts of newspapers or independent broadcasters who must satisfy the whims of proprietors and shift copies or sell advertising space... BBC news, theoretically at least, is ... ineffable, truth-telling the kind of God the father of journalism... (Higgins 2015, p.146).*

In addition, the BBC is often associated with "Britishness" (Marr 2004; Higgins 2015), which might embrace staidness and excessive bureaucracy (Barnett 2012; Higgins 2015). The BBC itself states an intention to reflect a range of views and voices within coverage of economic issues, and to avoid giving undue weight to specific institutional perspectives (BBC 2012). Contributors to a BBC seminar about EBF reporting in 2012 concluded that plural and diverse opinions were "essential" (BBC 2012). Under the BBC's "wagon wheel" model of impartiality, this plurality should justifiably extend beyond the traditional binary of neoliberalism versus Keynesianism to include a range of ideas from free-markets to interventionism, embracing new economic models which are less reliant on the relentless pursuit of growth.

The apparent lack of commercial imperatives and self-proclaimed even-handed intentions however, do not mean media organisations are "ideologically inert" (Porto 2007, p.23). In contrast with requirements of impartiality, the traditional argument - usually promoted by those in the political right - is that the BBC's role as a public service broadcaster means that it is allied to the political left (see Marr 2004; Barnett 2012; Jones 2014). This view was endorsed in 2010, by then BBC Director General Mark Thompson, who described the corporation in the late 1970s as being characterised by "a massive bias to the left" (in Helm 2013). There is little evidence to support this analysis (Hopmann et al. 2010; Higgins 2015). However, there is compelling evidence, regarding financial matters at least, showing that that the BBC lean to the political right (Berry 2013a; Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2013; Burrell 2014). The broadcaster is considered to offer an "establishment view" (Hargreaves 2003, p.27); the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme for example, "has a business slot fronted by a former city executive, in which CEOs are rarely criticised" (Dorling 2014, p.23).

### 2.3.3 Different but also the same: the homogeneity of BBC and ITV.

Research shows that news reports are increasingly homogenous. Despite claims of diversity within "news formats, news philosophies and news values" (Harrison 2000,

p.106) and some obvious differences between the two channels, news is becoming increasing similar (see, inter alia, Harrison 2000, 2006; Paterson 2003; Barnett et al. 2012). A pro-establishment BBC1 and an ITV1 that does not challenge advertisers, might, in practice, operate according to similar editorial principles. Moreover, if ITV1 is engaged in comparatively few disagreements with government by virtue of its private funding, and has a lesser appetite for investigative reporting (see Barnett 2012), then *its* relationship with “the establishment” might also be comfortable and unchallenging. Further, Marr (2004) muses ITV’s future possible acquisition by an American conglomerate (see also Sweney 2015b), and suggests that the inevitable pro-business output would not concern any British government in power at the time.

Further, it is claimed - anecdotally - that BBC1 is taking an increasingly lighter approach, adopting more commercially-driven onscreen protocols and practices (Barnett 2012) often associated with ITV. Former senior BBC figures, for example, are quoted as suggesting that of the objectives to “inform, educate and entertain”, entertaining viewers is paramount, since unless viewers found programming “agreeable”, they would not watch or listen long enough to be educated and informed (Higgins 2014, p.52-3). That the BBC has softened its news agenda seems undeniable given evidence from its own staff. Over a decade ago for example, World Affairs editor John Simpson cited “a lack of interest” in foreign affairs, and War Correspondent Kate Adie described the corporation as “far more tabloid than it used to be” (Jury 2002). Martin Bell observed that *The Six O’Clock News* seemed as if it had “inherited the values as well as the audience of [the soap] *Neighbours*, which so seamlessly precedes it” (Jury 2002). Other BBC staff members also expressed regret that programming had “dumbed down” amid “over-emphasis on celebrity led, contrived reality and lifestyle formats” (Bingham 2008).

Any convergence between BBC1 and ITV1 news might be considered through the prism of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) where the “politics and rituals” of many realms – “including mass media” – operate with increasing similarity (Clausen 2003, p.33). The large scale content analysis central to this project examines homogeneity within the wider news agendas of both channels; channel divergences are referred to, but wider trends followed by both channels are considered as being more significant.

## **2.4 Summarising contemporary EBF journalism.**

Using the model outlined in Figure 2.1, this chapter has examined the mechanisms potentially influencing EBF and PIE news, and develops a series of expectations for the ways that such news might be reported by BBC1 and ITV1.

Among the outer layer mechanisms, channels are governed by remits to be impartial and to varying degrees, to act in the public interests. Beyond these wider obligations, it might be expected that BBC1 will adhere closely to its public service obligations, providing probing and analytical journalism from various stakeholder perspectives. ITV1 on the other hand, might be reasonably expected to defer to the interests and ideological interests of the corporate world generally, and its own advertisers more specifically.

According to the more operational mechanisms within the middle layer of the model, the personal, professional and practical factors shaping the reporting of EBF and PIE issues mean that there are subjective reasons for the selection and presentation of news. Stories might appear on the basis that they will appeal to wider audiences, but reporting is also constrained by what is practically possible given the available resources, and the competencies, preferences and habits of editors and journalists.

The inner layer of analysis considers evidence showing how EBF news has *actually* been historically and traditionally shaped by all these factors. The conclusion is that despite the normative ideals of journalism, EBF reporting is often indolent towards capitalism, operating on the basis of a comfortable symbiosis between those reporting and these being reported. The financial crisis has evoked a new level of interest in EBF news and offers an opportunity for EBF specialists to redefine their discipline according to more normative aims. The empirical work that follows examines whether this opportunity has been grasped.

This chapter ends with a focus on EBF texts, and Chapter 3 continues this focus by attending to the narrower field of PIE issues, examining the characteristics associated with this type of news reporting, and where possible, on TV news in particular.



## **Chapter 3. How are poverty, wealth, the “squeezed middle” and income inequality represented in the media?**

Using the three-layer model in Figure 2.1, Chapter 2 considered the factors shaping EBF and PIE news reports. Continuing with the focus on the inner layer of “text” established towards the end of Chapter 2, Chapter 3 now more closely considers news reports containing PIE themes, and has two functions. First, it identifies and examines the themes, topics and academic debates that extant literature suggests will characterise the media coverage of PIE issues. This generates a series of reference points against which empirical findings can be compared. Secondly, these themes inform Level 2 Content Analysis, as they provide a series of likely categories that will capture the data required to answer the research questions. The chapter therefore considers research about human conditions (poverty, wealth and the “squeezed middle”), and then the distance between them (income inequality).

### **3.1 Poverty and its causes.**

Poverty is the condition experienced by those whose resources are so limited that they are adrift from locally accepted minimum ways of life (European Council 1975; Seymour 2009). More simply, poverty represents the inability to meet one’s own basic needs (Fosu 2010), which might be the lack of food, shelter, access to clean water or medicine, and the lack of opportunity for improvement (Addae-Korankye 2014). Poverty also involves marginalisation and exclusion (European Anti-Poverty Network 2009), incorporating the challenge of making choices and sacrifices, and living in the state of “perpetual fear” (Seymour 2009, p.9). More widely, poverty impacts health, life expectancy, lifestyle, and levels of power (Flaherty et al. 2004).

Aside from the discursive constructions of poverty, the condition is officially measured in relation to earned income. In the U.K, a household is “poverty” when it receives less than 60% of the national median income (Office for National Statistics 2012). According to this metric, around 20% of the U.K’s population lives in poverty (see MacInnes et al. 2013; Milmo 2014; Oxfam 2015). Table 3.1 summarises the themes and topics emerging from literature on poverty and its coverage, which are then examined in more detail in sections 3.1 and 3.2.

**Table 3.1. Summary of themes within literature about poverty and its media coverage.**

Causes	The identified characteristics of coverage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Systemic</b> – corrupt administrations, poor infrastructure, war, famine, lack of education and opportunity, lack of good quality work, pay, unhelpful welfare and taxation.</li> <li>• <b>Individual</b> – laziness, inflexibility, substance abuse, poor life choices, poor financial management</li> <li>• <b>Fatalistic</b> – circumstances of birth, misfortune, ill health, geographical positioning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little coverage, and mostly geographically located, often in Africa.</li> <li>• Ethnic groups are more prominent, shown as an underclass and blamed for their own plight.</li> <li>• Familiar and stereotypical discourses of famine, war and so on, often sensationalised and removing agency from those in poverty.</li> <li>• Celebrities and voyeuristic spectacle often a distraction from causes and consequences.</li> <li>• The poor themselves are often not featured, but are also demonised, as coverage is driven by elites for their own interests, some way removed from the realities of poverty.</li> </ul>

Poverty varies nationally or internationally (Lugo-Ocando 2015), and there is a consensus that the causes of poverty are many and varied (Lynch et al. 2004; Alderson et al. 2005; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010), as well as being dynamic and complex (Jenkins 1996; Lemieux 2008; André et al. 2013).

The causes of poverty can be described as being either individualistic or structural. Poverty can be caused by “individual weaknesses, failings and inadequacies” (Royce 2009, p.14), while structurally, more systemic factors embracing societal, political and economic elements transfer blame “away from the poor and toward society as a whole” (Dordick 2007, p.215). While systemic causes are usually the precursor for individual causes (Ambert 1998), Feagin (1972) adds the dimension of fatalism - fatalistic causes are not associated with individual choice or systemic decisions but are connected to circumstances of birth, upbringing and unforeseen misfortune. Each type of cause is now addressed in turn.

In the Royal Commission on Poor Laws and Relief of Distress (1909), Beatrice Webb was one of the first to propose that poverty has wider, societal causes. This idea has since gained support (see, inter alia, Commission of the European Communities 1990; Kim et al. 2010). First within this systemic paradigm, poverty might be caused by cruel and/or corrupt national administrations (Addae-Korankye 2014; Luis-Ocando 2015) whose policies favour the wealthy (Downes 2012). Such regimes are often accompanied by economic instability from which nations are unable to recover (Addae-Korankye 2014). Further, the servicing of national debt cripples economies (Ambert 1998; Borgen Project 2013), preventing investment in infrastructure, albeit such causes are typically associated with African nations.

While globalization is blamed for causing international poverty (Ambert 1998), colonisation is claimed to have caused division, conflict and civil war (Downes 2012; Addae-Korankye 2014; Dogra 2014), and the lack of adequate and accessible education is another contributing factor (Weiner 1995; Halik et al. 2010; Addae-Korankye 2014; European Anti-Poverty Network 2015). Beyond such pejorative legacies, assistance offered by institutions such as the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund has been considered inadequate (Downes 2012; Borgen Project 2013). Poverty is also caused by crop failure, famine, natural disasters (Downes 2012) or other factors associated with “Mother Nature”. The impact of such disasters is such that people become refugees within their own countries, the ability to recover from disaster hampered by the lack of resources (Addae-Korankye 2014), often due to overpopulation (Dogra 2014).

Such causes are clearly not as applicable to the U.K in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More locally, causes of poverty include the quality and availability of adequately paid work (see, inter alia, Bobo et al. 1997; Harkness et al. 2012; European Anti-Poverty Network 2015), low and falling wages (see, inter alia, Weiner 1995; Halik et al. 2010), unhelpful taxation or welfare systems (see, inter alia, Ambert 1998; Sider 2007; Harkness et al. 2012), and exploitation and prejudice (see, inter alia, Royce 2009; Halik et al. 2010).

The individualistic approach to poverty has less legitimacy than the structural alternative (Royce 2009). However, and despite contrary evidence (see Kim et al. 2010), Iyengar (1990, p.22) found that “from the perspective of television news, poverty is clearly an individual-level rather than a societal phenomenon”. This idea has gained traction (see Pew Research Center 2007); indeed, stereotypical perceptions are often shaped by beliefs that the poor are to blame for their own misfortune (Cozzarelli et al. 2001). Notwithstanding the contentious nature of the structural versus individualistic causality debate, some research proposes that individualistic causes are more compelling (Feagin 1972; Kluegel and Smith 1986). Such factors include laziness (Gans 1995; Weiner 1995; Gilens 1999; Halik et al. 2012), lack of motivation and ambition (Weiner 1995; Ray 2006), substance abuse (Weiner 1995; Halik et al. 2012), the lack of adequate financial planning (Weiner 1995; Wilson 2010) and poor behaviour or life choices (Royce 2009; Kim et al. 2010) often including “a legacy of worklessness” (Harkness et al. 2012, p.5). When

subjected to such environmental conditioning, citizens might have less agency than suggested by such an individualistic framework, and causes might be more fatalistic.

Such fatalistic causes of poverty (see Viljoen and Maseko 2013; da Costa and Dias 2014) are often considered more compelling than individualistic causes (see Schwartz and Robinson 1991), and include misfortune, ill-health, dysfunctional family backgrounds (see, inter alia, Ambert 1998; Abouchedid and Nasser 2001; Halik et al. 2012), being part of a minority social group, or living in a remote geographical area (European Anti-Poverty Network 2015). In practice, the causes of poverty are many and varied (Sider 2007) and the empirical analysis in Chapters 7-9 examines whether the causes of poverty might be categorised as structural, individualistic or fatalistic. These categories also inform Level 2 Content Analysis, since they provide a basic taxonomy of causes that may reasonably be expected to appear within TV news reports.

### **3.2 Analysis of poverty coverage.**

As a constituent element of income inequality (see McCall 2013), there is more research regarding the reporting of poverty than of any other PIE element; this however, is concentrated more on newspaper coverage than on TV coverage (McKendrick et al. 2008). What poverty coverage there is on TV news is often embedded in a range of story categories (Gilens 1996<sup>1</sup>; Kendall 2012) and is regularly mentioned in passing, rather than appearing as a main issue (see McKendrick et al. 2008). Consequently, journalists find it difficult “to give poverty a focus”, since it is “ongoing and amorphous” (Robinson et al. 2009, p.11).

Consistent with the increasing reliance on PR (see Chapter 2), reports about poverty - especially in newspapers - are often prompted by reports or research (Hanley 2009). Much such research is conducted on behalf of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to highlight discussions about poverty and injustice (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2014). However, the conclusion from extant literature is that there is little poverty-centred news (Cohen 1997; deMause and Rendall 2007). For example, even though when in office, former Prime Minister Gordon Brown made reducing poverty a key policy, the media rarely covered the issue, and poverty was lost within the political struggle (Seymour 2009). When poverty is reported however, there are some

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<sup>1</sup> The range included homelessness, welfare, education, charity, employment, law, crime and various others.

commonly-held perceptions regarding its presentation. This series of themed debates provides the context against which empirical findings can be compared and discussed, while also helping to determine the variables in Level 2 Content Analysis.

### 3.2.1 International/home poverty, and the geographical other.

Poverty is often associated with certain locations (Lugo-Ocando 2015), rather than a general and widespread lack of resources and opportunity (Spectacle Productions 2014). Coverage of non-U.K poverty such as that experienced during African famines for example, contributes to wider understandings of the issue (McKendrick et al. 2008). Indeed, McKendrick et al. (2008) found that international poverty was covered more than U.K poverty. However, there are concerns; while day-to-day events might be ignored, international crises such as famines and wars draw media attention but the urgency of coverage does not always attend to the most important elements (Lugo-Ocando 2015). Famine, for example, can be reduced to a natural disaster devoid of any discussions regarding multiple causes, with education and guidance from “the west” seen as the key to recovery (Sorenson 1991).

Moreover, there is evidence that ethnic groups are treated less sympathetically in poverty reports than the white population (see, inter alia, Gilens 1996; Clawson and Trice 2000; deMause and Rendall 2007; Voorhees et al. 2007). Ethnic groups are also shown to have less power and status (Graves 1999; Lugo-Ocando 2015), and as an underclass presenting a deviant threat to white “victims” (see, inter alia, Van Dijk 2000; Shields 2001; Mantsios 2005; Hodgetts et al. 2005; Hanley 2009).

Often, media employ visual and verbal discourses associated with the concept of the “other” when reporting poverty (Sorenson 1991; Lister 2004). These include showing the poor as homogenous, unruly and passive (Lugo-Ocando 2015), with images often showing inactive victims (especially children). While journalists may be prepared to apportion blame, this may not implicate “the west”, and the championing or demonization of African leaders in particular depends on their allegiance to elite western nations (Luis-Ocando 2015). Dogra’s (2014) taxonomy of “postcolonial” discourses associated with international poverty includes children, and the binaries of superior/inferior, safe/dangerous and order/disorder, besides other themes such as overcrowding, famine and war. In sum, albeit within a U.S context, Gilens (1996 p.537) concludes that “apparently well-meaning, racially liberal news professionals”

construct “destructive” reports that do not reflect racial realities. One danger of employing such familiar stereotyping is that “warts and all” poverty is not accurately expressed, and those not conforming with acceptable, familiar and unproblematic norms are unseen (Robinson et al. 2009, p.19). In this regard, and ahead of the empirical analysis in this study, the consensus is that media coverage of poverty is inadequate and misleading.

Since this research focuses on the presentation of UK poverty, one key question will be whether the BBC and ITV frame coverage as an international issue, rather than one more focused on the U.K. Such local poverty is constructed, reinforced and contested by media (Gamson 2004), and representations of poverty in the *Big Issue*, the *Guardian*, and on TV (for example *Ministry of Food* and *The Secret Millionaire*) have been described as positive (Robinson et al. 2009). Lugo-Ocando (2015) asserts that it is easier to define international poverty than local poverty; indeed, local poverty is especially difficult to demonstrate during relative prosperity. For TV news, coverage of U.K poverty may be problematic; this research examines what images and narratives are used to index poverty on a more local basis, and how, for example, the reporting of such local poverty differs from reporting with an international focus.

Poverty must compete within a “market place” of news (Robinson et al. 2009), and is often embedded within other stories. For example, Dorling (2014) cites a story reporting how 700 care homes were due to close, potentially leaving many elderly residents homeless. These events he suggests, were presented with an emphasis on business rather than focusing on the medical and social consequences for displaced residents. Consequently, because it is difficult to represent and is generally downbeat, poverty reporting is minimal, inadequate, and when it occurs, may be overly sensational (McKendrick et al. 2008; Robinson et al. 2009). The social actors most prominently featured are children (Seymour 2009) and single mothers (Iyengar 1990), albeit contrasting evidence presents poverty as a male problem (Shields 2001; McKendrick et al. 2008).

Poverty coverage therefore, generally focuses on narrower demographics and generates “more individual and less societal conception of responsibility for poverty” (Iyengar 1990, p.36). However, coverage exclusively featuring “vulnerable” groups like the old or young often draws attention away from other groups whose stories are also worthy of telling (Seymour 2009). Perceptions of the groups most afflicted

by poverty shape the level of support for policies seeking to address it (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Iyengar 1990). Therefore, the types of social actors featured most often might impact the influencing power of TV news reports, and the subsequent responses to them. As channels with public service obligations, normative expectations of ITV and the BBC are that at a time when poverty levels are increasing, they should cover poverty accurately, sensitively, without sensation and offer policymakers both the motivation and support for corrective action. Examining which social actors are present is a key indicator of poverty framing, and the empirical phase of this research quantifies social actor categories appearing within identified PIE reports.

While poverty may be a worthy issue, editors are faced with choices between “important but dull” stories and “trivial but interesting” ones (Robinson et al. 2009, p.11). Consequently, the “packaging” of poverty is important. Food, clothing, food banks, dilapidated buildings, cramped living conditions and other “Dickensian” themes are regular indexes of the condition (see, inter alia, Devereux 1998; deMause and Rendall 2007; McKendrick et al. 2008; Seymour 2009; Blundell and Etheridge 2010).

### 3.2.2 Poverty as entertainment.

Poverty is often presented as entertainment (Sorenson 1991; Hanley 2009; Spectacle Productions 2014; Dogra 2014). Narratives are often constructed using familiar yet powerful images (Schraeder and Endless 1998), with “usual” types of imagery being preferred to the more “unusual” that audiences might struggle to identify with (Lugo-Ocando 2015). For example, pictures of starving Africans indicate vividly how the first world dominates the third (Escobar 2012), but such “flies in the eyes” imagery shows victims as “needy, passive, helpless, and vulnerable”, stripping away the “agency” and “dignity” of those involved, in “patronizing, orientaling, and dehumanizing” ways (Orgad 2013, p.8).

When part of poverty and humanitarian coverage, celebrities are often a distracting focus (Devereux 1998; Shields 2001; Lugo-Ocando 2015), as overly theatrical reports emphasise their celebrity lifestyles, which will sharply contrast with those they might be helping (Van den Bulck and Panis 2010). Within a U.K prism, Paul (2015) identifies myths which many may still believe to be true, including suggestions that “people are

better off on benefits than working”, “people have large families in order to claim benefits”, and “people on benefits are defrauding the system”. Such themes contribute to the development of “poverty porn”, which forms the basis of non-news programmes such as *Benefits Street*. Accordingly, “the poor” are treated as if they are “a separate group of people with a completely different way of life” (Paul 2015). Level 2 Content Analysis coding is able to determine the ways in which poverty is packaged, and if these can be interpreted as voyeuristic.

### 3.2.3 The poor are faceless, blameworthy and unlucky.

Even when offered the opportunity to discuss poverty, there is a significant trend among media not to do so (McKendrick et al. 2008). Further, the poor themselves are often not visible in poverty reports (DeMause and Rendall 2007; McKendrick et al. 2008), and while millions are impacted by poverty, other crises affecting far fewer people often secure more coverage (Mantsios 2005). Finally, there are inconclusive debates as whether U.K poverty is presented heterogeneously (McKendrick et al. 2008), or whether the poor are aggregated and are not clearly identified (Mantsios 2005). If poverty coverage is characterised by an absence of the poor themselves, then once again, determining which social actors featured within TV news reports can either support or challenge such a theme.

The concept of the poor being either “deserving” or “undeserving” is strongly reflected within extant literature (see, inter alia, Breen and Devereux 2003; deMause and Rendall 2007; Seymour 2009; Robinson et al. 2009; Redden 2011). The poor are considered as “undeserving” for example, when coverage focuses on criminality, begging and deviance (Shields 2001; Kendall 2012). Research considering ITV coverage of poverty showed that despite many poor people having long employment histories, the homeless still “need to be taught the value of work and that any work provides positive benefits for people” (Hodgetts et al. 2005, p.44). The work-shy and lazy, migrant workers and asylum seekers draining welfare systems are also regular themes (Redden 2011; Sayer 2016). Similarly, reports were found to neglect “the reality of low-paid occupations, which can be overly coercive and humiliating” (Hodgetts et al. 2005, p.44).

Research shows that the poor are often shown as powerless (Van Dijk 2000; Voorhees et al. 2007) and “passive recipients” of welfare (Devereux 1998, p.88). They



are also suggested to be irritants, and a drain on resources (Mantsios 2005), anecdotal evidence showing that journalists seek extreme cases of poverty, rather than more typical, ordinary examples (Harper 2001). Moreover, poverty is often shown as self-inflicted (Mantsios 2005) where people lack “motivation or morality” (Iyengar 1990, p.32).

In sum, while the visual, visceral, personal and shocking elements of poverty are emphasised, because coverage may be superficial, wider discussions of cause, effect and policy are marginalised, and wider socio-economic connections are ignored (see, inter alia, Belle 2006; deMause and Rendall 2007; McKendrick et al. 2008; Allen and Silver 2014). Emancipation is a key objective of critical realist research (Archer et al. 1998), and one important question addressed within the empirical phase of this project is whether either side of the financial crisis, TV news reporters on BBC1 and ITV1 have moved beyond such unidimensional presentations of poverty. The analysis that follows evaluates the extremes of this debate, and determines whether the poor are shown to be complicit or innocent in terms of their own plight.

#### 3.2.4 Poverty delivered by an unprepared media system.

Operationally, institutional constraints and deadlines within newsrooms may necessitate fast decisions about which images to use without any deep analysis of their consequences. Practicality may therefore prevail over ideological intention (Devereux 1998). However, the construction of PIE news reports still involves considerable choice on the part of journalists and editors.

Pertinently, Royce (2009) recognised that “political and media rhetoric” disparage the poor, objectivising them, isolating them and removing them from view. Unsurprisingly, therefore, notions of elite hegemony dominate scholarship about poverty, and even though coverage might be expected to include the poor themselves, reporting often defers to government or corporate “experts” (deMause and Rendall 2007; McKendrick et al. 2008; McCall 2013), with third sector agencies featured less often (McKendrick et al. 2008; Kim et al. 2010). Indeed, as Cottle (2009) notes, in the aftermath of humanitarian disasters, there is often a media parade of elite figures, implicitly supporting primary definer theories where powerful and establishment figures provide the key commentary.

Amid claims that the political right has “figured out” how to “play” the media (Champlin and Knoedler 2008, p.140), there have been claims that news discourses, particularly on the BBC, were designed to appease the then Coalition government (Gilligan 2013). The arrival of TV channel Al Jazeera, however, has introduced new perspectives on poverty, and empirical evidence shows that it features the issue more often than the BBC (Lugo-Ocando (2015). In general, despite those covering poverty often lacking empathy because of their social and geographical distance (Spectacle Productions 2014; Lugo-Ocando 2015), Shaw (2012) advocates that journalists should provide moral testimony rather than dispassionate reporting.

Generally, the compelling argument is that when covering poverty, media maintain the status quo of privileged power (Chomsky 1998; Devereux 1998; Shields 2001), while critiques of capitalism and the way it generates poverty are missing (Redden 2011). Research into media coverage of poverty represents a microcosm of the general criticisms of EBF journalism, repeating narratives that powerful elites are privileged within narrow discourses, and not obviously inspiring active debate or change. Wealth, the open market, liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation are not challenged, and news is constructed according to suit market-driven economies (Lugo-Ocando 2015). Journalists and editors often have a narrow view of the world, and rarely stray from tried and tested news conventions and practices (Lugo-Ocando 2015).

The analysis in Chapters 7-9 examines whether this can be challenged within PIE news reports in 2007 and 2014, and whether the financial crisis has redefined poverty coverage. Further, at a time when free market economies are criticised for not providing universal prosperity, the analysis that follows examines whether social actors with alternative views are given airtime, and whether other economic systems are offered as credible alternatives.

### **3.3 The “squeezed middle”.**

Poverty represents one extreme of the income inequality continuum. Many of its subthemes are also pertinent, perhaps in a milder form, to the “squeezed middle”. The “squeezed middle” is less clear-cut than the concept of poverty, and might be more usefully described as “middle-class pain” (O’Brien 2011). Hitherto, the phrase “middle class” has embraced ordinary people and those with considerably

comfortable lifestyles. Indeed, in a major study about social class, both types of middle class - “established” and “technical” - possess “high economic capital” (Savage et al. 2013, p.12). In contrast, as it has become a more quoted concept (Plunkett 2012), the “squeezed middle” clearly excludes the wealthy, since it implicitly describes a group who have suffered under neoliberal economic systems, especially during the financial crisis (Economist 2014). Instead, it relates to “employees whose security and relative earnings have suffered in the wake of economic deregulation and globalisation” (Perkins 2015, p.36).

The “squeezed middle” therefore, is largely a political construct, developed primarily to move economic debates beyond the measurement of GDP, to instead acknowledge and examine that while the wealthy may have been largely insulated from the financial crisis, the wages of many millions of others have stagnated. Former Labour Party leader Ed Miliband adopted the phrase (see O’Brien 2011; Monaghan 2014), suggesting that it applied to hard working people who are neither rich nor poor. This was further interpreted by the BBC’s Nick Robinson as “pretty much everyone - bar, perhaps, the very poor and the very rich” (BBC 2010). The definition adopted here is that the “squeezed middle”, as a consequence of the “draconian cutbacks” within the new fiscal landscape (Dittmann et al. 2011), are those “ordinary” citizens who are finding debt more difficult to service, their ability to borrow restricted, their welfare payments cut, their non-essential purchases less possible, and in general, their everyday lives financially challenging (Thomas 2016)<sup>2</sup>.

Accordingly, this group are described by pollsters Ipsos Mori as representing “the majority of the population”, and containing “more swing voters than any other group” (Woods 2014). Government fortunes, it is claimed, are “umbilically tied” to the British economy and Eurozone (Kenny 2012, p.152). This can be demonstrated for example, by the Conservative Party featuring their economic record as the cornerstone of their successful 2015 General Election campaign (Cushion and Sambrook 2015; Deacon et al. 2015). Moreover, when, in June 2016, U.K citizens voted to leave the European Union, the defeat was sufficiently serious that Prime Minister David Cameron resigned as a consequence. It is clear therefore, that the

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<sup>2</sup> Since the “squeezed middle” has been defined for the purposes of this research, hereafter it will be quoted without inverted commas.

middle classes, however stratified, are politically important since without their support, ruling power is unstable (Bourguignon and Verdier 2000; Dorling 2014).

While the “squeeze” is an international phenomenon (Barbehön and Haus 2015), in the U.S, the middle class are now more prone to economic insecurity (Kendall 2012), as “middle-income Americans have fallen further behind financially in the new century” and “their median wealth (assets minus debts) fell by 28% from 2001 to 2013” (Pew Research Center 2015). Indeed, even if it was ever a realistic proposition to begin with, the “American Dream” is threatened (Ladd and Bowman 1998) to the extent that it “appears to be well and truly broken”, and without heeding the precedent, the U.K “may well witness the decline and fall of the middle class on this side of the Atlantic, too” (Woods 2014). Indeed, the U.S crisis “should be a wakeup call to the U.K policymaking community” (Parker 2013, p.11), and Level 2 Content Analysis examines whether news reports are descriptive, analytical, and prescribe change or remain passive.

Accordingly, this research empirically examines whether coverage attends to the localised problems that interest and concern the squeezed middle, such as house prices, pensions, the cost of borrowing and so on, and whether these issues are viewed through their eyes, or from the point of view of corporations and governments with discussions about growth, currency and the wider economy. Under a public service broadcasting system, it is reasonable to expect that licence fee payers are privileged. There are calls therefore, for public discourse to appeal to “ordinary people” (Hanley 2009), and that EBF reporting in particular, should reflect the interests of the majority rather investors and corporations (Shaw 2015). While there is an official measurement to determine poverty (see section 3.1), the squeezed income is a nebulous category. However, it is key within this research project, since the category can be reasonably expected to include a large percentage of the audience watching these news bulletins, and those, who, according to normative models of television journalism, the coverage should serve. Table 3.2 shows the emerging themes from extant literature, which are examined in section 3.3.

**Table 3.2 Summary of themes about the squeezed middle and its media coverage.**

Definitions, causes, consequences	The identified characteristics of coverage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vague concept, politically developed.</li> <li>• Used to develop debates beyond discussions of GDP and wider economic performance.</li> <li>• Includes large proportion of population (audience) who hold the political balance of power.</li> <li>• Has many causes in common with poverty.</li> <li>• Caused by the perfect storm of stagnant/depressed wages and increasing prices across most areas of modern life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little substantial scholarship, but middle class shown to be in decline.</li> <li>• They are blameless victims and precariously positioned.</li> <li>• Elites not implicated as many elements of modern life and aspirations for the future become less achievable.</li> <li>• Squeezed middle discussed in wider financial terms rather than the narrow focus in the case of poverty.</li> </ul>

### 3.3.1 Factors contributing to the squeeze.

If the squeezed middle is a milder form of poverty, it might be caused by many of the same factors. Notwithstanding such generalisations, even within such a relatively undeveloped field of research, there appears to be a consensus that some specific factors are involved. First, real wages in the U.K have fallen more than in almost all other OECD countries (see, inter alia, Woods 2014; Machin 2015; Resolution Foundation 2015). Figure 3.1 tracks the fluctuations since 2000, and the decline since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008.

**Figure 3.1 Average weekly earnings in the U.K since 2000.**



(from Corlett and Gardiner 2015, p.8)

Corlett and Gardiner (2015, p.8) conclude that “with average weekly earnings still more than £25 below their peak it will be some time before pre-crash earnings are restored”. Moreover, “with wages falling and tax credits no longer providing the support they did” many households “face a daily struggle to keep up with the rising

costs of essentials” (Whittaker 2013). Accordingly, the U.K economy pays “wages too low to sustain a family” (Plunkett et al. 2014, p.29), and “the real value of the National Minimum Wage has now fallen for five years in a row”. This minimum wage mechanism designed to offer some form of “protection” has therefore deteriorated in terms of its efficacy (Plunkett et al. 2014, p.29).

Machin (2015) asserts that “falling real wages and reduced living standards are one and the same”, however this wage crisis is further amplified when considered alongside a general increase in prices. Even between 2001/2 and 2007/8, when the U.K median income remained stable (MacInnes et al. 2013), the cost of living increased. This is especially pertinent in the case of housing, which inevitably attracts considerable attention since it represents the largest cost for many families. For increasing numbers of people, home ownership is “out of reach” (Wardrip 2013, p.105), especially since 100% mortgages are no longer offered (Whittaker 2013). Consequently, the deposit for an averagely priced home would take over 40 years to save if potential homebuyers saved 5% of their income (O’Brien 2011) and as a result, many people now live in rented accommodation (Resolution Foundation 2013; Plunkett et al. 2014).

In addition to more expensive housing, the cost of the traditional “basket of goods” (Office for National Statistics 2016) embracing many of the elements of modern life such as food, fuel, and energy prices has risen disproportionately (see, inter alia, O’Brien 2011; Niemietz 2012; Resolution Foundation 2013; Plunkett et al. 2014). Furthermore, unprecedented increases in childcare costs (Plunkett et al. 2014) hamper the aspirations of second earners within families (Resolution Foundation 2013), while university tuition fees have also risen (Brown 2013; Plunkett et al. 2014; Woods 2014). At the same time, debt is increasingly problematic, especially since the U.K is now “a nation of spenders rather than savers” (Smith-Ramani and Mehta 2013, p.117). For many, solving income/cost deficits with consumer credit is the sole option (Collard and Hayes 2014). In sum, the perfect storm of low wages, inflationary price increases, rising debt and a lack of savings leaves many “vulnerable” to even small financial “shocks” (Resolution Foundation 2013).

### 3.3.2 Middle class discourses, and media coverage of the squeezed middle.

In their meta review of contemporary middle class discourses in Europe, and Germany in particular, Barbehön and Haus (2015) define the middle class as a focal

point of concern within various public, media and intellectual debating forums. Such discourses can also be mapped to the UK; the middle class is variously described as in decline, debilitated, abandoned, targeted, precariously positioned, and generally eroded in terms of prospects. Level 2 Content Analysis examines whether on BBC1 and ITV1 bulletins the middle class are framed as being so disadvantaged.

Champlin and Knoedler (2008) note that from the 1980s, middle class decline *was* covered by the media, but that this disappeared during late 1990s and 2000s. Mirroring the causes explained earlier, more recent coverage often focuses on downsized lifestyles, credit problems, education costs, pensions and the cost of care insurance (Kendall 2012). Media coverage of the middle class include notions of the *new poor* (Devereux 1998; Breen and Devereux 2003) who find their lifestyles suppressed, resonant with the “faded blue collar” framing where the previously prosperous are now more financially stretched (Kendall 2012).

The ways that the media present “class” strongly influence perceptions about inequality and associated issues (Kendal 2012). Middle classes prefer news narratives reflecting cultural and economic elites and stories about the types of lives they aspire to; these are to be found among entertainment, business and military news, and do not challenge hopes of social mobility (Champlin and Knoelder 2008). Media also distort reality, so that the middle classes become fearful of those who have less than they do, rather than blaming those who have more (Mantsios 2005).

By virtue of their middle class, citizens are often shown to be blameless, the inference being that, for example, the achievement of home-ownership should be rewarded (Devereux 1998). Consequently, the middle classes are often shown to be victims (Mantsios 2005) and increasingly vulnerable from corporate downsizing (Kendall 2012). So while the poor are marginalised and subject to narrow media framing, the declining nature of the squeezed middle is emphasised in broad financial terms, embracing the wider economic landscape. In sum, this research examines whether the squeezed middle is prominent within TV news and whether, as Devereux (1998) claims, coverage is connected with calls for government intervention. Their means extending beyond those of the middle class, the wealthy are more likely to be taken notice of than any other social class (Hacker and Pierson

2010; Bartels 2008; Mantsios 2005), and this is now the next PIE category to be considered.

### **3.4 Wealth.**

Almost half of the U.K's private wealth is concentrated among the wealthiest 10% of the population (Glasgow University Media Group 2010). Even a critic of the prevailing economic system providing such prosperity concedes that society needs "entrepreneurs, inventions and innovators" (Piketty 2014, p.443). In contrast however, most wealth is inherited (see also Ryan 1994; Piketty 2014) since, as Beckert (2008, p.1) notes, "everyone who owns property leaves it behind". If wealth therefore, can be presented as either positive or negative, Level 2 Content Analysis seeks to determine the prevailing framing on BBC1 and ITV1 in 2007 and 2014. Table 3.3 summarises the themes identified within extant literature regarding wealth, which are then explored in sections 3.4 and 3.5.

**Table 3.3 Summary of themes within literature about wealth and its media coverage.**

<b>Definitions, causes, consequences</b>	<b>The identified characteristics of coverage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wealth can be earned or inherited.</li> <li>• Ratio of executive pay to average pay has grown exponentially.</li> <li>• High pay causes angst, as does the way in which pay is "camouflaged".</li> <li>• High pay might be justified as supply and demand, necessary for staff retention, involving a comparatively small amount of money, or necessary to keep less senior staff motivated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often focused on specific individuals.</li> <li>• Wealth can be framed positively, admired, and described in terms of philanthropy.</li> <li>• The wealthy can also be framed as immoral, and greedy. The system allowing their misdeeds is not challenged.</li> <li>• The wealthy are not probed, but coverage often presents their interests as widely applicable.</li> <li>• Celebrity lifestyles are prevalent, as are "rags to riches" stories.</li> <li>• High pay is newsworthy, and some corporations are identified as media favourites.</li> </ul>

#### **3.4.1 The impact of increasing high-end remuneration.**

High-end executive remuneration is a significant contributor to earned wealth; banker pay in particular has been especially scrutinised during the financial crisis (Pryce et al. 2011; Whittle and Mueller 2012; Thomas 2016). Numerous stakeholders take an interest in such pay arrangements, particular their size (Crean 2004; Kay and Van Putten 2007), and debate ranges from opinions that high pay is justified (Murphy 1985), to assertions that remuneration levels are "madness" (Loomis 1982). Such remuneration is highly newsworthy, and an inevitable driver of inequality as executive salaries increase faster than wages at the opposite extreme of the continuum. Coverage of such high pay is likely to be a reliable indicator of the way that income inequality is reported, and this research considers whether in a capitalist



system, the news reports in question take a critical line towards such corporate affairs, or whether such pay awards are defended. This indeed, is a key variable, since it seems logical and likely that many of those receiving high pay might also, for example, be sanctioning advertising spend on ITV. Alternatively, a public service broadcaster such as the BBC might reasonably be expected to hold those paying and receiving such salaries to account.

Since Plato originally advocated a ratio of 4:1 or 5:1 between the highest and lowest paid (Tilley 2010; Kakabadse et al. 2004), this ratio has increased steadily (see Crystal 1991; Wagner and Minard 1999). It is now measured in the hundreds (see, inter alia, Subramanian and Kawachi 2004; Judge 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Dorling 2014), the most extreme examples occurring in the U.S and U.K (Kaplan and Rauh 2009; Bell and Van Reenen 2010; Thomas 2016). Sayer (2014, p.217) for example, notes that the CEO of J.C Penney earns over 1700 times more than the average salary paid to his employees.

In the U.K, research covering the period 1979 - 2012 conclusively shows that top executive salaries increased far faster than average pay and inflation (Atkinson 1997; Finch 2007; Topham 2013). By 2016, evidence from corporate reports shows that the increases were continuing without restraint (Mongahan 2016). Though they represent only a relatively small percentage of the working population, a disproportionate share in the increase in the top decile<sup>3</sup> is accounted for by financial sector employees (Bell and Van Reenen 2010). The leitmotif of “excess” predominates remuneration scholarship (Lissy and Morgenstern 1994; Brown 1992). This is particularly pertinent during “austerity”, since many people find their lifestyles compromised, while seemingly executive remuneration awards are not subject to any form of constraint (Gómez-Mejia and Wiseman 1997; McCall 2013).

The rewarding of substandard performance unsurprisingly causes angst (see, inter alia, Brown 1992; Conyon and Leech 1993; Lissy and Morgenstern 1994; Perkins 2009), as does the way remuneration packages are “camouflaged” (Bebchuk and Fried 2004; Bolton et al. 2006; Kay and Van Putten 2007; Weisbach 2007). Indeed, as executives have become skilled at setting their own pay, basic salaries are a diminishing element (Piketty and Saez 2006; Bell and Van Reenen 2010), and

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<sup>3</sup> The top 10% of earners.

elements such as bonuses, stock options and pensions (Dymond and Murlis 2008) now account for large percentages of total remuneration packages.

The relationships between remuneration committees and the executives whose pay they are setting are charged with being symbiotic and collusive (see, *inter alia*, Crystal 1992; Lambert et al. 1993; Main et al. 1995; Bolton et al. 2006; Gregory-Smith 2012). Pay-setting processes serve executives but not others (Crystal 1992; Jensen and Murphy 2004; Farmer et al. 2013), and corporate governance is undermined since CEOs in particular, are so powerful (Main et al. 1995). Under intensified scrutiny, and against a backdrop of increasing inequality and poverty, and discourses of greed and clandestine self-serving (Dorling 2014), these salaries will inevitably require justification. While legitimisation is essential for organisational credibility (Main et al. 1995), such credibility is nonetheless extremely difficult to maintain (Elsbach and Sutton 1992). TV news reports therefore, might frame corporate actions as justified and credible, or greedy and unethical.

One possible justification offered by social actors in news reports, and wholly resonant with free-market principles, is that remuneration is driven by supply and demand (Finkelstein and Hambrick 1996; Gomez-Mejia and Wiseman 1997). Another is that remuneration levels and recruitment must be considered through a global prism (Hampel 1998; Conyon and Murphy 2000; Tan and Crombie 2011) as the “war for executive talent” represents a preoccupation for large organisations (Chambers et al. 1998). In reality however, there is compelling evidence indicating that the cross-border recruitment of executive staff is rare (High Pay Centre 2013).

Other options available to social actors attempting to justify high pay in news reports include notions that executive roles require unusually high commitment, sacrifice (Smith 2007; Takala and Aaltio 2007) and longer hours (Reynolds 2006; Gwartney et al. 2011). Furthermore, and contextualising these high salaries in relation to wider corporate budgets, in reality they may be no greater than expenditure on stationary (Smith 2007) and charitable donations (Perkins 2009). A further possible justification for large executive remuneration is “tournament theory” (Lazar and Rosen 1981), where the income gap between senior managers and those below them is purposely wide to provide incentive and motivation (see Lloyd 2010). As a consequence, junior colleagues aspire to the salaries paid to more senior colleagues, and increase their

effort and performance accordingly (Bell and Van Reenen 2010; Rosen 1981). In such a case, critics might conclude that executive focus is on personal advancement rather than job performance. If social actors are indeed shown to defend and justify prevailing remuneration practices, this research examines whether such established arguments are used, if the financial crisis has shaped new forms of justification, or if they have been abandoned entirely.

### **3.5 Media coverage of “wealth”.**

The concept of wealth itself appears to attract comparatively little media coverage. Instead, the emphasis is on those who have acquired it. The media’s fascination with wealthy people is demonstrated by the annual focus on *The Sunday Times Rich List*, and a general enthrallment with the “financial excesses of footballers, City fat cats and lottery winners” (Seymour 2009, p.7). More specifically, discussions about wealth often amount to “a few peremptory and largely arbitrary assertions about the relative merits of this or that individual” (Piketty 2014, p.444), confirming the media focus on the wealthy themselves.

As key contributors to research into media coverage of the wealthy, Kendall (2012) and Mantsios (2005) provide loosely parallel theories regarding media framings, which can be simplified into “positive” and “negative” presentations. Similar to the focus on executive remuneration, a wider focus on wealth enables conclusions as to whether the financial crisis has redefined themes of financial success, and if the creation of wealth has a narrow focus on individuals and is shown as being somehow tarnished.

#### **3.5.1 The wealthy are presented both positively and negatively.**

The default for reporting the wealthy, according to extrapolations of the wider theories about EBF journalism (see Chapter 2), is that their wealth is not probed, and that the powerful are not challenged with any hostility (see Ladd and Bowman 1998; McCall 2013; Dorling 2014). Regular currency, stock market and ski reports on TV implicitly suggest these are issues of universal interest when for most they are wholly irrelevant (Kendall 2012). Consequently, the concerns of the wealthy are presented as applicable to all (Mantsios 2005); while coverage of the poor may be characterised by deviance, in the U.S at least, the “upper” and “middle” classes have lives often seen as the “norm for how things ought to be” (Kendall 2012, p.119).

The celebrity lifestyles of the wealthy are a regularly recurring theme within U.K media (Sedghi 2013). According to more positive framings, stories reflecting “rags to riches” transitions are highly newsworthy, and offer the impression that anyone can succeed, despite overwhelming odds (Kendall 2012). Central to the “American Dream” are notions that small business owners are exemplar of endeavour and graft, and aspire to become part of the bourgeoisie (Kumar 2005). The reward of enterprise is more generally pertinent, as are descriptions of successful individuals possessing special skills (Mantsios 2005) and identifiable leadership “traits” (Stogdill 1974; Smith and Foti 1998). Finally, in “admiration” framings, the media focus is on the philanthropic side of wealth, charitable donations and good deeds (see McKendrick et al. 2008; Kinsley and Clarke 2008). Cassidy (2011) for example, suggests that the positive sentiments expressed at the death of Apple’s Steve Jobs is indicative that “great entrepreneurs are still celebrated”.

The acquisition of wealth however, can also be framed more negatively. Inevitably, increased spending power is closely associated with consumerism, which, fuelled by advertising, has become “insatiable” and characterised by “gratification” underpinned by a “permanent discontent” (Lewis 2013a, p.54). Media coverage often attends to the cost of material possessions - most notably houses - giving insight into what it must be like to be wealthy and what high-end consumerism facilitates (Kendall 2012). However, these are not the only negative frames associated with the wealthy; others reflect notions of “schadenfreude” (Thomas 2016), the deriving of satisfaction when the rich fail, and the realisation that their wealth might be flawed (Seymour 2009; Kendall 2012). Large-scale frauds at major banks are exemplar of such stories (Taibbi 2014).

Similarly, the wealthy might believe that no purchase is outside of their reach, and are be “bad apples” with apparently good taste and style (Kendall 2012; Mantsios 2008). Moreover, the wealthy are also presented as scoundrels and their misdemeanours described with distaste (Mantsios 2005). Such coverage however, ignores the types of system that facilitate abuses of privilege and how often they occur (Mantsios 2005). Accordingly, free-market systems might be considered to facilitate, or even encourage high-end remuneration; this can be identified as one of the “outer layer” factors driving news reports described in Chapter 2.

Both the media and the public overwhelmingly classify executive pay as excessive (Tan and Crombie 2011). In the same way that CEOs may be shown to be “saints and then sinners”, coverage is subject to “fits and fads” (Hamilton and Zeckhauser, 2004, p.4), and intensifies during economic crises. Resonating with notions that editors take a news value approach, one TV news anchor proposed that “big pay packages for executives”, “big takeover targets” and the “huge corporate egos involved” were stories to “beat an episode of Dallas any day” (Hamilton and Zeckhauser, 2004, p.3). Surprisingly, scholarship considering coverage of executive pay is scarce. That which does exist finds high salaries often result in critical media coverage (Core et al. 2008). The complicating factor for ITV is that they may rely on the corporations in question for advertising revenue, and may feel pressure to defer to these potential sponsors. The BBC on the other hand, are normatively expected to serve their licence payers with probing, incisive journalism.

Whittle and Mueller (2012) reveal metaphors and narrative constructions offered by bank executives, but seemingly, little research exists into how recipients of high salaries defend them in public forums, such as the media. Similarly, Tan and Crombie (2011) investigate stakeholder legitimisations regarding the pay of the New Zealand Telecom Chief Executive, and use “remuneration logics” synthesised from social actor statements. This is a list of potential remuneration reactions and discourses, many of which were adapted and included in the Level 2 Content Analysis coding framework (see Chapter 4).

Otten (2010) finds that once Dutch media had identified certain corporations as newsworthy in terms of their remuneration practices, these organisations were revisited, irrespective of their size or level of remuneration. Level 2 Content Analysis examines whether TV news has some “favourite” organisations in this regard. Tienari et al. (2003) show that executive discourses are more regularly featured than those from rank and file employees. However, their work considers corporate acquisition, and the more compelling argument is that when coverage considers remuneration, as well as inadequately communicating with internal audiences (Ellig 2007; Dymond and Murlis 2008), executives themselves are often absent for external audiences (Tan and Crombie 2011), with surrogate spokespeople often acting on their behalf (Staw et al. 1983; Elsbach 1994). As part of its examination into coverage of PIE issues, this research examines which social actors and discourses are privileged in BBC1 and ITV1

news reports. While being wealthy or poor are human conditions, this chapter now considers the difference between these two measures: income inequality.

### **3.6 Income Inequality: a developing issue, and one difficult to present.**

Income inequality “does not resemble a single policy issue”, and is a “meta-issue with a galaxy of cases, consequences, forms, values and policy solutions affiliated with it” (McCall 2013, p.57). Therefore, “income inequality” does more than describe the gap between rich and poor (Schramm 2005; Wong et al. 2009); it is evaluative and pejorative, reflecting the negativity of injustice and the “positive ethical value” of “equality” (Charles-Coll 2011, p.17). Table 3.4 summarises the identified themes that provide the framework for this section.

**Table 3.4 Summary of themes within literature about poverty and its media coverage.**

<b>Definitions, causes, consequences</b>	<b>The identified characteristics of coverage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An issue with many elements and difficult to describe – metaphors often used.</li> <li>• Measured by Gini coefficient, showing UK income inequality comparatively high.</li> <li>• Considerable socio-health consequences, evidence showing more pejorative health outcomes in unequal countries.</li> <li>• Shift to free markets, technological advances and globalisation increase inequality.</li> <li>• Decline of trade unions, higher executive pay, increase in precarious work have also increased inequality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covered infrequently. Little UK research into the issue.</li> <li>• Coverage rarely moves beyond political framing.</li> <li>• Income inequality is an embedded issue.</li> <li>• Momentum of income inequality as a news issue did not continue.</li> <li>• Occupy considered to have developed from a widespread protest about inequality, the 1%/ 99% theme being regularly mentioned.</li> </ul>
<b>Solutions and cures</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redistribution and predistribution – taxation, benefits and addressing inequality via the greater opportunities and a fairer sharing of wealth.</li> <li>• NMW is a mechanism for improvement.</li> <li>• More radical types of tax on the wealthy, and new types of economic system are also proposed, but are politically contentious.</li> </ul>	

While poverty and wealth can be represented pictorially and verbally, despite being relatively simple to measure, income inequality is more difficult to describe. Metaphor is ubiquitous in everyday discourse (Lakoff and Johnson 2003; Morgan 1997), and has been used to conceptualise income inequality. Pen (1973) for example, describes the phenomenon in terms of an imaginary procession where each citizen’s height is proportionate to their income. The result is “a parade of dwarfs and a few giants” which “really tells us something” about income inequality (Pen 1973, p.48). The imbalance of a significant short population and a few very tall people clearly indicates a disproportionate distribution of incomes. While average income

recipients are of average height, professional classes are measured in yards, with some CEOs standing 120 yards high. Billionaire John Paul Getty's height for example, is estimated at "ten miles, maybe twice as much" (Pen 1973, p.53), the uncertainty in the statement implicitly alluding to the difficulties in quantifying the assets of the mega rich. Intentionally or not, Pen's parade might have been inspired by an episode of *The Frost Report* in 1966, when John Cleese, Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett performed "the classic comedy sketch on social mobility" (Telegraph 2005)<sup>4</sup>. Like Pen, the comedians used height, this time to demonstrate the prosperity of the various layers within the British social class system (See Figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2 "I look up to him but down on him..." Social Mobility on *The Frost Report*.**



In another metaphor, Toynbee (2003) describes a caravan crossing the desert with sheiks and their entourage leading the procession, and the working poor trailing behind; she rhetorically asks whether they can still be described as travelling together.

Despite such accessible discourses, academics cared little about the way that income is distributed until relatively recently (Atkinson 1997). Figure 3.3 is basic chart showing the worldwide use of the phrase "income inequality" within a large corpus

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<sup>4</sup> This sketch is available on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00hhrwl> (Accessed on 8th March 2016).

of books, articles and other texts<sup>5</sup>. It indicates that the phrase only gained significant traction after the late 1970s, and has fluctuated thereafter.

**Figure 3.3 Chart showing historical rate mentions of phrase “income inequality”.**



Academically, income inequality became more mainstream during the 1990s (Atkinson 1997), the new interest perhaps indicating a shift away from official data sources (Jenkins 2007) to more empirical and independent analysis. Pryce et al. (2011) list the major quantitative measures of income inequality; these include the *Robin Hood* index (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Schiff 2010); the *Decile* ratio (De Maio 2007; Haughton and Khandker 2009) and the *Theil* index (Oyelere 2010).

Despite such an array of measures (Dorling 2014), the most popular is the *Gini Coefficient* (see, inter alia, Haughton and Khandker 2009; Badolo and Traore 2012; Yang et al. 2012). A Gini Coefficient of 0 (zero) means that individuals in a defined population have identical incomes, and a coefficient of 1 (one) reflects a population where one person receives all available income (Saunders 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011).

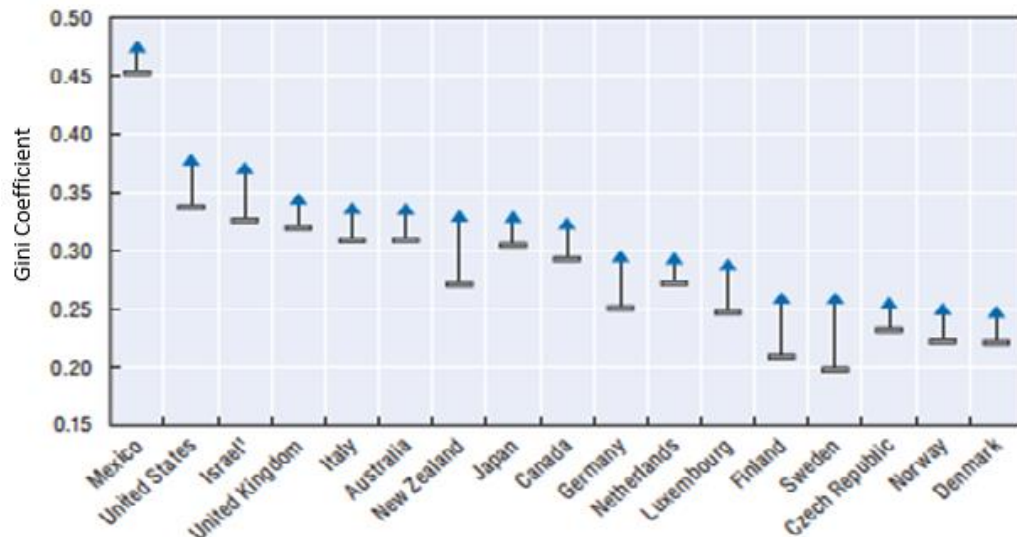
Notwithstanding concerns that the Gini Coefficient does not comprehensively describe inequality (Jenkins 2009), it has been widely adopted. As part of this examination of income inequality coverage, the use, or absence, of this official metric enables some conclusions as to how deeply the issue is covered; mentions of the Gini Coefficient for example, might indicate that income inequality is considered a standalone issue worthy of discussion. Income inequality has increased in most countries during the last few decades (Goesling 2001; Subramanian and Kawachi

<sup>5</sup> This chart was generated using *Google Ngram*, which can establish the frequency of a word or phrase within around 5 million books, articles and other written texts.



2004; Jäntti and Jenkins 2010); Figure 3.4 confirms that the trend is global and that over the last 30 years, income disparity has generally increased across the U.S and Western Europe (Bok 2010).

**Figure 3.4 Selected Gini Coefficients of income inequality, 1985-late 2000s.**



Source: **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2011, p.24).** The length of the arrow indicates the magnitude of change; longer upward arrows indicate a greater increase.

There is further compelling evidence showing that the increase in U.K income inequality has been more dramatic than that experienced in other developed economies (see, inter alia, Fritzell 1993; Atkinson 1997; Alderson et al. 2005; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2008). It has been “well above the OECD average in the last three decades” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2015, p.1), and Atkinson (1997, p.300) asserts that within the global context of income inequality, “if you want to see a *big* increase then it is to the United Kingdom that one has to look”.

The trend is confirmed by Dorling (2016) who, shortly before the nation voted to leave the E.U, showed that “the U.K is the most economically unequal state within Europe”. Between 2007/08 and 2013/14 however, U.K income inequality generally fell, but rose again in 2013/4, from 0.337 to 0.343 (Belfield et al. 2015, p.33). Projected growth, welfare cuts and changing taxation thresholds are likely to fuel further increases (Cribb et al. 2013). It could be reasonably expected therefore, since data shows income inequality to be increasing, that such a narrative would feature strongly in TV news reports about the issue.

### **3.7 Income inequality: why it matters from the socio-health perspective.**

Regarding the effects and social outcomes associated with income inequality, intra-national research has largely replaced inter-nation study (Goesling 2001; Subramanian and Kawachi 2003). However, within “flagship” sociological journals at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, academics were “strangely and remarkably silent” on the issue of income inequality (Morris and Western 1999, p.624). This appears to have notably changed in recent years and accordingly, it is reasonable to expect that the issue would justify coverage on mainstream TV news, especially when, through public service regulations, broadcasting systems must serve the public by discussing issues of social importance.

Inequality results in less compassion and more shame, almost to the extent that poor are dehumanised (Dorling 2014). Income inequality “constrains pupil achievement at the lower tail of the distribution”, and so for pupils from poorer households, learning can be problematic (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 1995, pp. 81-2). Inequality also generates protest and instability, as elites seem to benefit disproportionately (see, inter alia, Miller 1982; Lloyd 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011; Kelley 2012; Stiglitz 2013).

Further, within the European Union, income inequality may retard cohesion and integration (Van Stolk et al. 2011). Moreover, there is strong evidence suggesting income inequality drives poverty (see, inter alia, Allegranza et al. 2004; Bakare 2012; Khan et al. 2013), which is then a “powerful social divider” stratifying society and separating rich and poor geographically and socially (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010, p.162). Indeed, one representative of the global banking sector described growing inequality as a “social time bomb” (in Dorling 2014, p.116). Egalitarian societies seem more desirable, and simplistically, drawing people closer together seems more attractive than dividing them (Thomas 2014). Such discontent however, might increase the appeal of more extreme political parties (Duca and Saving 2012; Goodwin 2014), or encourage people towards a more individualist outlook where they “bowl alone” (Putnam 2000). These are all potential themes within TV news reports regarding income inequality.

Inequality has economic, social and political implications (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011), in addition to other outcomes such as divided

communities, environmental degradation and democratic efficiency (Shaheen 2011). The new emphasis on linking income inequality with numerous pejorative outcomes (see Kaplan et al. 1996; Jenkins 2007; Van Stolk et al. 2011) is a strong determinant for policymaker action. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) bring new thrust and focus to the study of inequality, and provide evidence that inequality leads to anxiety about status, incorporating emotions such as envy, greed, anxiety and shame. Wilkinson and Pickett's (2010) basic thesis concludes that among other issues, teenage pregnancy, life expectancy, trust, crime (see also Deaton 2003; Dorling 2014), violence and mental illness (see also Dorling 2014) are more prevalent in unequal societies.

Importantly, their intra-national research concludes that the effects of income inequality are not confined to those with the lowest incomes. Of these undesirable outcomes, the most compelling research strand concerns connections with health outcomes. Such are the wide-reaching impacts and implications of income inequality, in order to fulfil their social obligations, news broadcasters can be expected to feature this issue regularly and appropriately.

It seems reasonable to conclude that higher incomes positively affect health, since they enable consumption and environments conducive to healthier lives (see Thorbecke and Charumilind 2002). Besides well-documented links between poverty and children's health and well-being (Seccombe 2000; Lewit et al. 1997), a considerable corpus of evidence shows that income levels and/or socio-economic positioning strongly determine health outcomes (see, inter alia, Subramanian and Kawachi 2006; Rowlingson 2011).

At national level, "inequality is highly predictive of health" (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, p.502), and tangible links have long since been found between income inequality and mortality across a range of ages (see, inter alia, Preston 1975; Lynch et al. 1998; Babones 2008; Idrovo et al. 2010; Torre and Myrskylä 2013). Table 3.5 summarises key meta-analyses assisting the evaluation of the inequality-health hypothesis. It shows that the correlation between income inequality and pejorative health outcomes is supported, in full or in part, by around 75% of the research studies referred to.

**Table 3.5. Summary of Meta-Analyses regarding inequality-health hypothesis.**

Review	Number of studies in review	Empirical support for inequality-health hypothesis		
		Wholly supportive	Partially supportive	No support
Lynch et al (2004)	98	42%	25%	33%
Wilkinson and Pickett (2006)	168	52%	26%	22%
Torre and Myrskylä (2013)	26	58%	19%	23%

### **3.8 Income inequality: why it matters from the economic perspective.**

The profile of income inequality was raised considerably by Piketty (2014), whose book was variously described as a “publishing sensation” (Giles 2014), “the most important economics book of the year - and maybe of the decade” (Krugman 2014a), and “an unexploded bomb within mainstream, classical economics” (Mason 2014). Differentiating between wealth and income, Piketty (2014, p.571) proposes that given the contemporary era of moderate growth, returns on capital (such as inherited wealth) will outperform wages, causing the gap between the wealthy and those who “own nothing but their labour” to increase. Such a move towards “patrimonial capitalism” means that the circumstances of birth matter more than entrepreneurial endeavour (Krugman 2014a).

The fundamental issues with such “powerful forces of divergence”, claims Piketty (2014, p.571), is that they threaten “democratic societies” and “the values of social justice on which they are based”. Mason (2014) asserts that if Piketty’s analysis is accurate, then “the implications for capitalism are utterly negative: we face a low-growth capitalism, combined with high levels of inequality and low levels of social mobility”. Piketty’s thesis has attracted unsparing criticism from those promoting free-market economics (see, inter alia, Edsall 2014; Giles 2014; Wile 2014). However, Nobel prize winning economist Paul Krugman (2014b) judges that “with painstaking data analysis”, and “a tour de force of economic modelling”, Piketty “has transformed our economic discourse” and that “we’ll never talk about wealth and inequality the same way we used to”. This research project enables conclusions pre and post crisis, and indeed pre and post Piketty, about whether TV news views income inequality through different economic prisms. Prior to examining existing research into media coverage of income inequality, this appraisal now considers academic research considering its causes, and what solutions may be available to ease it.

### 3.8.1 Political Factors - reduced regulatory regimes and weaker welfare.

Income inequality is caused by a range and combination of political, social, economic and institutional factors. In the U.K, Margaret Thatcher's influence permeates much of the economic theorizing about income distribution, especially since she cast doubt on the concept of "society" (Turnbull 2003). Instead, she advocated that "people must look to themselves first" (Brittan 2013), in line with the individualist culture prevalent within Anglophone nations (Hofstede 1980). Consequently, the sharp increase in income inequality in the late 1970s and early 1980s coincides with a change in U.K economic governance towards a neoliberal free market approach (Dorling 2014). Even though attributing increasing income disparity to Thatcherism is too simplistic (Jenkins 1996), the abolition of The Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth in 1979 (Atkinson 1983; Jenkins 1996) demonstrates purposeful deregulation (Turnbull and Wass 2010), and an ideological shift towards the supremacy of liberalised markets (Budrys 2003, McGuigan 2005). The de-regulation of the U.K's financial markets has further hardened this resolve (Dorling 2014), and given that such de-regulation can be judged as not assisting those in most financial need, this study examines whether TV news probes and critiques such free market principles.

For those in financial need and not directly benefiting from free-market systems, welfare is a main income source (Atkinson 1997; Dorling 2014). Although traditional Keynesian theory advocates "state-sponsored redistribution" (Gintis and Bowles 1982, p.341), there is considerable contemporary evidence that welfare budgets are being cut and criteria for eligibility are becoming more onerous (Mulholland 2010; Butler 2013; Watt 2013b). Consequently, lower tail income distribution<sup>6</sup> is seriously impacted. The state pension system in particular is also under pressure as resources are transferred from the "greying population" to other demographics (European Commission 2013, p.11).

### 3.8.2 Economic factors – globalisation and technology.

As growth and investment increase alongside less stringent regulation and lower shipping, communication and production costs (Dreher and Gaston 2007), in a

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<sup>6</sup> "Upper tail distribution" is the difference between the 90th percentile and the median and "lower tail distribution" is the difference between the median and the 10th percentile (Bell and Van Reenen 2010).

process of globalisation, neoliberal market-driven economic policies can spread more easily across Anglophone countries.

Research proposes several ways in which globalisation affects income inequality. First, while some export-led economies in the global market re-invest in infrastructure, education and jobs, other economies do not, instead reducing “social expenditures and progressive taxation” (Stiglitz 2013, p.80), meaning that only the wealthy benefit. Next, “offshoring” means that jobs are relocated from richer to poorer countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2012; Lee et al. 2013), and demand for labour and income inequality potentially increases in both affected areas (Feenstra and Hanson, 1996). Thirdly, cross-border risk is more difficult to control (see Atkinson 2001; Kawai and Prasad 2011; United Nations 2012), meaning that financial crises for example, can move across borders, bringing other causes of inequality with them. Finally, as the scale of commerce has increased (Gabaix and Landier 2008) so has the demand for high-profile executives (Gordon and Dew-Becker 2008; Lemieux 2008). Reductions in high-end income tax rates have benefited the highly skilled and highly educated, further increasing income inequality (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011). In sum, globalisation increasingly benefits those “at the top”, while those “in the middle” and those “at the bottom” increasingly lose out (Stiglitz 2013, p.80).

Technological advances mean leadership/managerial skills have become more generic, facilitating easier cross-industry and cross-border transition (Piketty and Saez 2006). More generally, technology has clearly benefited some more than others (Manning 2004). The “Skills-Based Technological Change” or “SBTC” (Lemieux 2008) fuels conclusions that “the population will soon be divided into two groups: those who are good at working with intelligent machines, and those who can be replaced by them” (Economist 2013). In sum, technological advances have been more beneficial to the highly skilled and educated (Machin, S. 2008; Van Stolk et al. 2011; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2012; André et al. 2013), and this research examines whether TV news presents income inequality in ways reflecting wider interests, rather than just those of the well-paid.

### 3.8.3 Institutional factors - declining trade unions, increasing high-end pay, precarious work and changing worker demographics.

Trade union weakness is thought to be major contributor to income inequality (see, inter alia, Piketty and Saez 2006; Machin, S. 2008; Bell and Van Reenen 2010; Van Stolk et al. 2011). In simple terms, where unions are “weak”, low pay is depressed, and where unions are stronger, the lower paid are more protected and inequality does not increase (Lemieux 2008). Despite union pay bargaining being valued by members, especially for its impact on reducing income inequality (Kaufman 2002; Turnbull 2003), deals between workers and bosses have increasingly replaced collective bargaining (Turnbull and Wass 2010). The general decline of trade union influence has occurred alongside globalisation (Dreher and Gaston 2007), and when multinationals are active across international borders, collective bargaining across whole workforces is weakened (Morris and Western 1999). Unionisation, therefore, is considered by some to be a challenge to the legitimacy of free trade (Rodrik 1999); as it is, weak unions disadvantage lower tail conditions, while upper tail incomes continue to increase, without apparent restriction.

Accordingly, contemporary income inequality is often determined by the increasing imbalance of income at the high end of the distribution continuum (Lemieux 2008; Hoeller 2012; Stewart 2012) as executive remuneration has risen faster than average incomes (see, inter alia, Alderson et al. 2005; Jenkins and Van Kerm 2006; Income Data Services 2010; Jowitt 2012). The prevailing Anglo-Saxon corporate culture is “increasingly aggressive” (Giddens 2004, p.53) and characterised by corporate greed (Kendall 2012; Dorling 2014). Even two decades ago for example, there was concern that high end remuneration was out of control (Lublin 1996).

“Deindustrialization” (Morris and Western 2002) has increased the availability of low-paid jobs such as those in the service sector (Goos and Manning 2007; Turnbull and Wass 2010). At the lower end, employment is now often measured in terms of “precarity” (see, inter alia, Vosko 2004; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011; International Labour Organisation 2012; Kalleberg 2013), which embraces characteristics including low earnings, uncertain hours, vague job specifications, limited security, few in-work benefits, and high vulnerability (Rodgers 1989; Tucker 2002; Laparra et al. 2004; MacDonald et al. 2012). Organisations benefit from precarious work since they can replace costly, fixed-contract staff with

temporary workers to whom they offer few benefits, pensions, and holidays (Standing 2011). However, there are few if any advantages for workers themselves, especially where trade union influence is diminished. The increase in precarious work is only facilitated by workforces prepared to supply it. Liberal Market Economies (LMEs) are characterised by diverse workforces including women, immigrants, part-timers and job sharers who are generally paid less (see Turnbull and Wass 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011; European Commission 2013), and so more people might find higher paid work more elusive.

Furthermore, the change in family structure is a further factor in the increase in income inequality during the 1990s (McCall 2013). The key shifts are identified as the attrition of the nuclear family (Bullock et al. 2001), an increase in single adult households (Brewer et al. 2012; European Commission 2013), and the traditional two-parent, one-earner families increasingly replaced by low-income single-parent families and higher-income two-parent, two-earner families (Levy 2008). All the elements described in sections 3.7 and 3.8 might reasonably contribute to news coverage about income inequality, previously identified in Chapter 1 as “one of the great debates of our age”. This research examines whether coverage extends to the discussion of such causes and consequences, and also the possible cures/solutions now outlined in section 3.9.

### **3.9 Solving income inequality – predistribution and redistribution.**

There is considerable evidence to show that economic rewards go to the “top” (Hacker 2011; Stiglitz 2013; Dorling 2014; Sayer 2014). Indeed, Hacker (2011, p.35) proposes that the state has “remade markets to advantage the top”, as policies supporting workers have not been enforced, while “corporate governance rules all but asked top executives to drive up their own earnings”. Addressing income inequality therefore, is most often associated with redistributive measures, where taxes and benefits “take from some and give to others” (Hacker 2013, p.148). However, “predistribution” is another alternative - the term refers to reforms encouraging “a more equal distribution of economic power and rewards even before government collects taxes or pays out benefits” (Hacker 2011, p.35). This is said to be “both more popular and more effective than after-the-fact mopping up” Hacker (2011, p.36). The U.K’s prevailing economic system is characterised as one of low intervention, or at the most, one involving light touch regulation. The thrust of



predistribution fundamentally challenges such neoliberal economics, by suggesting that markets and elements like top-end remuneration should be limited. Redistribution however, is a wider concept. Mechanisms associated with redistribution range from improved public services to the provision of more equal opportunities (Rowlingson 2011). This series of policy levers are all indicative of a will to address income inequality, and this research considers whether they are present in TV news coverage, and which types of social actors are seen to advocate them.

Adapting various taxonomies (for example Seymour 2009; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011; Van Stolk et al. 2011; Oxfam 2014), poverty and inequality solutions can be grouped as being pay-related, employment-related, welfare-related or support and training-related. Accordingly, these categories inform the coding framework within Level 2 Content Analysis. There is an implicit dilemma in that “it seems right to redistribute resources from people who have plenty to those who have little, but on the other hand, it seems wrong to take resources away from people who have worked hard or taken risks simply to make others more equal” (Saunders 2010, p.5). Notwithstanding such tensions, wealth redistribution is important within economic and political debates (Boadway and Keen 2000); in 2002, for example, then Prime Minister Tony Blair claimed that poverty was a multi-dimensional concept and addressing it would involve “income, public services and jobs” (Guardian 2002).

Perhaps easiest to address, in the short term, is income. Increasing pay at the lower tail of the income distribution continuum is one clear way to reduce inequality. The minimum wage, for example, is a “plimsoll line”; incomes below it make on-going survival more problematic (Spender 1912). In the U.K, the National Minimum Wage (NMW) was introduced in April 1999, indicative of the Labour government’s determination to reverse inequality (see Dickens and Manning 2004; Giddens 2004). It has since been described as a significant intervention in the labour market (Economic and Social Research Council 2015), and there is considerable evidence indicating that the NMW has reduced income inequality (see, inter alia, London School of Economics 2008; Autor et al. 2010; Dolton et al. 2012).

While the NMW has great potential newsworthiness since it impacts the lives of millions, the general arguments against it are that it increases inflation and interest

rates (London School of Economics 2008), that it has a narrow impact (Horrigan and Mincy 1993), and that employers downsize workforces to accommodate it (Thompson 2008; Roháč 2011; Dorn and Cooper 2013). In the U.K however, there is little evidence of a negative impact on employment (Machin and Manning 1994; London School of Economics 2008), and also little evidence showing a “spillover” impact benefiting workers earning above the minimum level (Dickens and Manning 1994; Stewart and Swaffield 2002; Stewart 2012). Though the NMW is strictly enforced (Malik 2013; Grice 2014), it is not perceived as a comprehensive panacea (London School of Economics 2008). However, the *Living Wage* - a further, voluntary advancement of the NMW - has been adopted by a number of high profile corporations and is supported by former Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, and Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn (Living Wage Foundation 2016).

There is a compelling evidence that “transfers” (“welfare” or “benefit” payments) are pivotal in reducing income inequality (see, inter alia, Mahler and Jesuit 2006; Brandolini and Smeeding 2009; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011, 2012; André et al. 2013). Similarly, nations with social-democratic welfare states have lower income inequality (Rodríguez-Pose and Tselios 2008). Reversing cuts to welfare, such as those made in the name of austerity, suggests Atkinson (2014, p.205), “is a key step towards returning to the lower levels of inequality successfully achieved in the past”.

However, one contemporary neoliberal counterargument is that robust benefit systems offer little incentive to work and create poverty traps and long-term dependency (André et al. 2013). Consequently, U.K policies have been more orientated towards encouraging claimants to return to work (Daguerre and Etherington 2009). There are recent doubts that the welfare state is able to provide protection and stability (Barbehön and Haus 2015), and there are calls for benefit payments to be “more or less equal for everyone, especially in the areas of health, education and pensions” (Piketty 2014, p.479). Such changes would require major investment, paid for by tax revenue raised from the wealthy (Dorling 2014).

Besides increasing wages, another solution to counteract poverty and inequality is via taxation (see, inter alia, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011, 2012; André et al. 2013; Draut 2013), as it raises revenue which can be

redirected to welfare transfers. If the wealthy pay a lesser proportion of their incomes on income tax and national insurance, income inequality increases (Office for National Statistics 2013). In contrast, progressive taxation, where the rate increases with incomes (Brown and Cook 1983) “is a crucial component of the social state”, capable of transforming contemporary inequality (Piketty 2014, p.497). Meanwhile, taxing “pollution” and “addiction” (Layard 2005), or taxing what we want less of (pollution) and not what we want more of (Daly 2008) may not help those on low incomes (see also Dorling 2014).

Most recently, taxation has been regressive and indirect, while progressive, direct taxation has been unpopular (Prasad 2008; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2012). For example, the multiple dimensions of executive pay are taxed differently (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2006; 2012), enabling corporations to construct remuneration packages in tax-efficient forms. If, indeed, income inequality is a “great debate”, then its TV news coverage can be reasonably expected to include the general issue of redistribution.

Besides addressing tax avoidance (Giddens 2004), taxing the super-rich class provides more effective solutions to income inequality (Dorling 2011). In addition to more conventional taxation addressing land, inheritance and capital gains (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2012), wealth taxes have also been advocated (Dorling 2014; Glasgow Media Group 2014), despite such remedial policies in general being difficult to enforce (Saunders 2010). Such ideas to address inequality, including higher taxation on inherited wealth and gifts, a minimum compulsory tax for corporations and increasing the higher rate of income tax to 65% (Atkinson 2014) are likely to generate considerable political debate. Further recommendations by Atkinson (2014) include directed technological change, the reduction of market power and capital endowment for all; while these have been received with some degree of optimism by the political left, many of these ideas appear to be extremely ambitious, especially when set against a generally continuing trend towards neoliberalism.

Income inequality has increased due to the polarisation of high and low wage employment (Lee et al. 2013). Enabling more people to work should lower income inequality, and evidence supports this (see Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development 2012; Prasad 2008). Indeed, the *Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020* agenda promotes labour force participation and reducing income inequality, inferring that these objectives are connected (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011). Increasing youth employment and mothers returning to work are thought to be especially important (André et al. 2013). As part of his comprehensive anti-inequality proposals, Atkinson (2014, p.142) recommends that individuals seeking employment and meeting some basic eligibility criteria would be “guaranteed a position for a minimum number of hours per week... paid at the minimum wage working for a public body or an approved non-profitmaking institution”. Services and policies providing employment, education and other amenities are all reliant on public spending, and such budgets currently under extreme pressure (Wright 2013; Elliott 2014).

Improved public services, especially health care and education are also proposed as solutions to ease income inequality (World of Work Report 2008; André et al. 2013). There is a strong case that higher educational attainment eases income inequality (see, inter alia, Berry and Glaeser 2005; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011, 2012; André et al 2013) and increases social mobility (Blanden et al. 2005). Nevertheless, education can be problematic; the cost of university education has increased in the U.K (Wyness 2012; Paton 2012). Moreover, due to “credentialism”, educational standards are raised meaning that some professions are only accessible to the more educated (Goos and Manning 2007) who by definition, will be the better off. A simple “needs-blind” meritocracy within university admission is therefore advocated as a better potential solution (see Giddens 2004).

Due to the current economic, social and environmental nadir, those advocating change often propose new economic systems incorporating egalitarianism. For example, there are calls to regulate incomes and reduce corporate excess (Daly 2008), to return to a culture of repair rather than replace (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Lewis 2013a) and to establish flatter systems of corporate governance (Lloyd 2010). The missions of the organisations promoting such thinking are summarised as advocating economies that work “for people and the planet” (New Economics Foundation 2014). Such calls fundamentally challenge many of the founding principles of neoliberal ideology. The prominence of ideas about new types of economy, different types of redistribution, taxation and investment (or, indeed their

absence) within TV news reports enables some conclusions about the level of commitment to neoliberal economics on the BBC and ITV.

### **3.10 Media coverage of income inequality.**

A paucity of associated research promotes the compelling conclusion that despite being “the elephant in the room” (Lugo-Ocando 2015, p.17), income inequality is covered infrequently by the media (Al Jazeera 2015). Within four major works specifically discussing inequality comprising a total of over 1300 pages (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Dorling 2014; Piketty 2014; Atkinson 2014), “media” is featured in the index of only one, and corresponds to one brief mention, indicating that the connection between income inequality and the media is tenuous at best. Though it does not address TV news coverage, a study considering three significant US newsweekly publications shows that the phrase “income inequality” was completely absent until 1988 (McCall 2013).

Studying the media coverage of income inequality therefore, represents a departure from the traditional ways of examining the phenomena; these include examining income trends, differentials and mobility (Jenkins and Van Kerm 2006). It is claimed that the media focus on income inequality has increased of late (Packer 2011; Schrodgers 2015), albeit there is little evidence of this within extant literature, which is most often U.S.-based. This study examines the magnitude and characteristics of income inequality on TV news, and with an approach consistent with critical realism, seeks to explain the structural mechanisms shaping such coverage.

A study of coverage in major US newspapers between 2002-2007 reveals a two-fold increase in income inequality stories versus the previous 5 years, but also that analysis rarely extended beyond describing the issue within a political framing, with globalisation and technological change seen as outside policymaker control (Champlin and Knoedler 2008).

Further, and in addition to the political contextualisation and superficial examination, U.S TV news coverage of income inequality rarely uses expert commentary (Bell and Entman 2011; Harrington 2016). Instead, coverage does not consider the value of equality (Lugo-Ocando 2015) and follows the familiar mantra that economic growth is always good (see also Lewis and Thomas 2015). This research considers whether

especially post crisis, such themes are evident. As has been made clear in this chapter, income inequality gains real context and significance when it is discussed in terms of its consequences; coverage according to normative theories of public service broadcasting for example, might be expected to frame income inequality in terms of its danger to society.

However, as was explained in Chapter 2, coverage is also shaped by news values - story characteristics that the public relate to. It is possible, therefore, that “economic inequality” means little to audiences (Ladd and Bowman 1998, p.3), and that people might not understand it (Dorling 2014) or even care about it (McCall 2005). This would inevitably mean a lack of coverage, yet among emerging themes, the contrast between affluence and poverty is clear (Livingstone 1998; Xu and Garland 2010), the binary enhanced by the contrast between extravagant lifestyles and job layoffs or cut-backs. The issue, in essence, has many newsworthy elements, and yet it does not appear to be prominent within news agendas, perhaps because it is difficult to represent visually.

Within research of media coverage of income inequality, albeit both studies considered U.S news content only, research by McCall (2013) and Harrington (2016) provide perhaps the closest points of reference. Albeit she considers American newsweeklies rather than broadcast media, in a research sample spanning over 30 years McCall (2013) finds only 57 pertinent articles. Income inequality, she finds, was noticed first in the 1980s, but stories about it decreased between 1995 and 2000, and as a consequence, people may perceive that income inequality may not have risen (McCall 2005). There was a minor increase between 2004 and 2010, and despite executive greed, economic instability, unemployment and cuts in public services, levels of coverage were similar to those in the peak years in the mid-1990s when there was a tangible sense of alarm (McCall 2013). Harrington (2016) meanwhile, more pertinently examining broadcast news, finds that in the first quarter of 2016, discussions about “economic inequality” fell away on major U.S broadcast and cable news stations. However, within the same sample, poverty coverage increased slightly, suggesting again, that income inequality is perhaps more difficult to depict in ways that conform to TV news production protocols, and in a form that is meaningful to audiences.

As it is “at the heart of the matter”, inequality might feature within media coverage of high-end remuneration (McCall 2013, p.75). In addition, McCall (2013) finds that income inequality is embedded within stories about welfare cuts, CEO pay, taxation, trade union decline, and the rise of the uber-rich; dominant frames include job security, social class, executive pay and perks, and injustice and the backdrop of the downturn. In general, however, McCall (2013) concludes that once income inequality had “taken root” as a fact, the momentum of coverage did not continue; despite ongoing real world events justifying a change to traditional “American Dream” ideology, media did not take the opportunity and coverage continued without a compelling central narrative. By not constructing such a narrative, (Chakravartty and Schiller 2010, p.683) summarise that the “steady dominance of the financial news field in the last two decades has played a strategic role in legitimating the visibly unequal class beneficiaries of globalization”.

#### 3.10.1 “Occupy” and its coverage.

Even if the issue of income inequality does not interest media audiences, protests and agitation are more newsworthy. Increasing inequality is cited as the root cause of multiple protests (Occupy London 2012; Lugo-Ocando 2015). Despite claims that people accept inequality “just as they accept the weather – there is apparently nothing they can do about it” (Scott 1982, p.57), the “Occupy” movement, beginning in the U.S, fundamentally challenged such notions. Despite criticism that their protests were incoherent (Katrandjian 2011; McKinley 2011), the theme of unjust inequality was globally-adopted as the movement’s central mantra (Occupy London 2012).

This strategy was effective in raising the profile of the issue (Packer 2011; Dorling 2014) as increasingly inequality was not only “hitched to an ailing economy”, but was also connected to social isolation, the resentment of the rich (Pocock 2011), and reckless triumphalism of acquiring wealth (McCall 2013). In the U.S, audience research across a wide sample found that the widening gap between rich and poor was a more compelling issue than drug abuse, free speech, gender equality, child mortality, malaria, leprosy, polio and landmines (Sutter 2013). “Occupy” represents a tangible manifestation of inequality, and this research examines the veracity of claims that such protest groups are largely absent from U.K media (McKendrick et al. 2008).

This chapter has firstly identified and synthesised debates and themes within the media coverage of PIE issues. These also inform the empirical coding framework, providing categories and variables that are likely to appear on the news bulletins in focus. The chapter has also assisted in terms of the identification of a gap in knowledge; there is little apparent research into the media coverage of U.K income inequality as a specific issue, let alone through the prism of TV news. The empirical analysis in Chapters 5-9 draws upon many of the themes within the appraisal detailed in Chapters 2 and 3, and examines their relevance within the coverage of EBF and PIE issues on BBC1 and ITV1 bulletins in 2007 and 2014.



## **Chapter 4. Watching the news: researching EBF and PIE reporting on BBC1 and ITV1.**

Previous chapters have established income inequality as a major contemporary issue; some people are wealthy, many others are poor, and the gap between them is increasing. How do we hold TV news to account so that the public are informed properly about this issue? Do broadcasters meet their regulatory obligations and act in the public interest? This chapter describes the fundamental research approach, and the methods used to answer the following questions first outlined in Chapter 1:

- *What were the general news agendas, and what proportion of news attends to EBF issues on the BBC1 and ITV1 10pm bulletins in 2007 and 2014?*
- *How and why has the coverage of EBF news on these channels changed across the financial crisis 2007-2014?*
- *What discourses, themes, and social actor contributions do these channels use to articulate the issues of poverty, wealth, income inequality and the squeezed middle?*
- *How do we explain the ways these news providers cover poverty, wealth, income inequality and the squeezed middle?*

This chapter follows the research framework outlined by Giola and Pitre (1990, p.585) which attends, in sequence, to the “nature” of phenomena (ontology), “the nature of knowledge about those phenomena” (epistemology), and “the nature of ways of studying those phenomena” (research methods). This chapter discusses the general philosophical approach to this research, the choices, benefits and details of content, critical discourse and multimodal analyses and one supplementary interview, and how these facilitate the intended level of investigation. The research process can be summarised as firstly quantifying the major themes, trends and social actors characterising the TV news coverage of EBF and PIE issues (WHAT and WHO) on BBC1 and ITV1 (WHERE), during 2007 and 2014 (WHEN). Once these have been determined, qualitative analysis reveals the tone, language, and style of these reports (HOW), before the data is discussed and explained (WHY).

### **4.1 Ontological choices: PIE phenomena are real.**

Critical research often attends to suppression or disadvantage (Robinson 1996) and sustaining “conditions and ideologies” (Knight 2002, p.34). Consequently, this

research is not neutral (Williams 2003), and personal axiology determines research worthiness (McDonald 2004; Saunders et al. 2007; McGrath 2008).

At the core of this study is a wish to investigate EBF news, most specifically how PIE issues are reported, and how some groups, actors and discourses are marginalised and others are privileged. This research is socially, economically and politically positioned, and such motivations are often considered essential for research projects (Burman and Parker 1993). Such objectives often precede good research; the study of poverty for example, may be driven by the belief it is undesirable (Williams 2003). Accordingly, explanations about ontological and epistemological positioning are necessary in order to facilitate “intellectual honesty and transparency” (Shields 2007, p.7).

Ontology entails a choice between *nominalism* and *realism* (Burrell and Morgan 1979). While nominalism contends that the social world exists in terms of “names, concepts and labels”, in contrast, realism proposes that it exists independently of human understandings and comprises of “hard, tangible and relatively immutable structures” (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p.4). In sum, the key ontological choice is between whether reality exists independently of human perception, or whether it is the outcome of individual meaning-making (Bracken 2010); reality is either “out there” and real, or “the product of one's mind” (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p.1). This research contends that the social world has its own reality, and that social actor behaviour is determined by context, situation and circumstance (Burrell and Morgan 1979). Some people are wealthy, while others are poor; their levels of comfort or discomfort are tangible and visible. Since we live “vicariously” (Kendall 2012, p.7), journalists and editors construct messages (McNair 1999; Callaghan and Schnell 2001) and shape our perceptions of these social conditions. More specifically, this study adopts the starting position that journalists report according to editorial policies, and that other social actors perform according to conditioning; corporate actors for example, will act in their employer’s interests, trade unionists will promote their member’s interests, and politicians will “toe the party line”.

Early media theory attributed almost full agency to those creating news and culture (Curran and Seaton 1991; Ang 1995; Negus 1995), but such “cultural pessimism” (Stevenson 1997, p.231) is outdated. Instead, the way that contemporary media transmits messages is more complex. Callaghan and Schnell (2001) propose three

possibilities for politically-associated coverage. First, media could present only one side of a debate, or secondly, a balanced report with journalists as arbiters. The third option is to create a media-constructed version of the debate in question. In this third instance, media more actively shapes public discourse by selecting from “many available frames offered by interest groups and politicians” (Callaghan and Schnell 2001, p.203). The concept of mediatization explains the process whereby media moves nearer “the centre of the social process” (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999, p.211), and shapes news itself, rather than allowing other actors to do so (Semetko et al. 1991; Cushion and Thomas 2013). It is perhaps, the epitome of media influence if governments can be compelled to act because of news coverage; the so-called “CNN effect” is exemplar (Feist 2001). *Live Aid* in the 1980s is another instance of empowerment (Robinson 2005) where “elite decision makers” lost “policy control” to the media (Livingston and Eachus 1995, p. 413).

If, as seems logical, politicians act when they sense public concern (Culpepper 2010), the news media is pivotal in presenting EBF and PIE issues (Champlin and Knoedler 2008) in ways that audiences will find interesting and concerning. It is “far from conclusive that media changes opinions” (McCombs and Shaw 1972, p.176), nevertheless there is a considerable consensus (consistent with the influencing factors at the heart of critical realism) that media has an impact on audiences (Callaghan and Schnell 2001). Besides *reflecting* public opinion and *reporting* policy and practice, media actively *shapes* ways citizens, business leaders and politicians understand and respond to issues (Fourie 2001; Lewis 2001; Baron 2006), particularly in regard to EBF and PIE issues.

#### **4.2 Epistemological positioning: discovering “what” and “how”, then “why”.**

This research moves beyond constructions of reality to examine underlying processes (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch 2008), including the personal, political and institutional factors informing social actor contributions to EBF and PIE news reports. The epistemologically pluralistic critical realism is “ethically and politically suited” to media analysis (Wright 2011, p.160) since it holds newsmakers responsible for their output. Critical realism resolves the dilemma of constructions co-existing with tangible outside factors, and represents a philosophical bridge embracing both positivist and constructionist elements (see, inter alia, Burgoyne 2008; Reed 2009; Bracken 2010). For example, constructed reality is complemented with attendance to

wider social and cultural contexts (Bhaskar 1989). Most pertinent for investigating PIE news, critical realism is emancipatory (see, inter alia, Bhaskar 1986; Sayer 1997; Bratton 2007; Vandenberghe 2013), and in addition to explaining the social world, critical realism also seeks also to change it (Schostak 2002; Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2010).

Critical realism proposes that reality is the outcome of social conditioning (Dobson 2002; Saunders et al. 2007), and considers ideas, but also what lies behind them (Bhaskar and Collier 1998). In sum, it examines *how* meaning is developed, before examining *why* (Guba and Lincoln 2003; May 2001). More viscerally, Wright (2011, p.160) describes the “obscenity” of “reducing human suffering to social constructions”, and the “intellectual irresponsibly” of ignoring what “prompts, enables, and perpetuates” such suffering. Accordingly, critical realism extends beyond positivism’s descriptive approach and constructionism’s face-value acceptance.

More broadly, critical realism is interdisciplinary, embracing insights from across human and social sciences (Deacon et al. 2007). While news bulletins offer “itemised parcels of data”, the contexts enabling them to be understood are provided by other disciplines (Deacon et al. 2007, p.11). In this case, explanatory theories are drawn from the realms of economics, organisational studies and media research. Critical realism is increasingly prominent within organisational studies (Leca and Naccache 2009; Al-Amoudi and Willmott 2011) as well as communications research. Reed (1997) asserts that reality-constructing *processes* should not dominate shaping *structures*, and while interpretive analysis does not attend to dimensions of power (Yanow and Ybema 2009), critical realism challenges deep-rooted social order (Alvesson and Ashcraft 2009).

Organisations can be viewed in terms of their historical, geographical and structural factors (Reed 2009). Although these shape human behaviour, organisational and institutional actions conflict, cooperate and comply (Friedland and Alford 1991) and so do not absolutely determine action, words and behaviour (Edwards and Delbridge 2013). Giddens’ (1984) implicit suggestion is that social actors retain agency over their actions and words rather than behaving in rigid, predetermined ways. This could be mapped to organisational discourses expressed by journalists, politicians,

executives and third party sector actors as they discuss EBF and PIE issues. This research determines whether social actors behave and speak in predictable, institutional ways, or act against type; journalists for example, retain the agency to act in contravention of institutional influences (Hesmondhalgh and Toyne 2008).

Underlying mechanisms such as corporate and broadcaster ideology, advertiser influence and official policy all inevitably influence editors and journalists as they choose news stories and prepare them for public consumption. This study examines these mechanisms and consequently, it can be described as retroductive (Olsen 2007; Reed 2009), which assumes the impact of structures and interrelations that are not always observable. Since “reality” may be difficult to observe (Deacon et al. 2007; Denscombe 2010), knowledge extends beyond what is visible to embrace concepts and theory (Reed 2009; Meyer and Lunney 2013). The often unobservable characteristic of reality is key to critical realism (Bhaskar 1998). Within the U.K’s mixed broadcasting model for example, the influence exerted over news output by large advertisers may be tacit rather than obvious. The critical political economy of media might not, by itself, explain news output. Consequently this research offers alternative theories embracing news selection and construction processes; retroductive research works backwards from identifying phenomena within data, and offers theoretical explanation based on evidence (Reed 2009).

Critical realism also addresses power relations (Newton et al. 2011; Al-Amoudi and Willmott 2011). It attempts to explain the reality extending beyond language, symbols and discourse to embrace entities, process and interrelations (Reed 2009). Critical approaches seek to examine how news output may be tied to elite structures (Reese 2007). Accordingly, critical realism provides a hard focus on structures, causes and explanations, and attends to power imbalances as some groups make decisions on behalf of others. These imbalances operate both inside and outside the news; politicians make policies that might disadvantage some social groups while TV news editors make decisions to present stories in certain ways.

In sum, this research aims to examine social actor discourses relating to the TV news coverage of EBF and PIE news, and to make a positive contribution to debates between media, policymakers, third sector organisations, and ultimately those in

hardship. Its approach embraces the framework developed by Gioia and Pitre (1990, p.591), which is adapted and shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 The research paradigm for investigating EBF and PIE issues on TV news.**

	<b>Generic characteristics</b>	<b>Specific project characteristics</b>
<b>Goals</b>	To identify sources of domination.	Some social actors and discourses might dominate news reports.
	To persuade, in order to guide change.	Identification and description are required before reform can take place.
<b>Theoretical concerns</b>	Domination.	Some social actors and discourses might dominate news reports.
	Alienation.	Some social groups (perhaps the poor) might be alienated in news reports.
	Macro forces.	These might be institutional constraints, editorial policies, ownership, governance, advertiser influence and public service obligations.
	Emancipation.	The exposure of imbalance or injustice may improve EBF and PIE coverage, helping the disadvantaged.
<b>Theory building approaches</b>	Liberation through analysis.	Reflection by news organisations – in accordance with research findings and conclusions – will assist reform.

Adapted from Gioia and Pitre (1990, p.591).

#### **4.3. The selection of TV channels, bulletins and years.**

Ahead of a detailed explanation of the research process, section 4.3 describes the process of selecting an appropriate sample. The prevailing U.K broadcasting model combines public service obligations with commercial elements (Leiss and Botterill 2005; Robertson 2010). In more recent years, the “cosy duopoly” of the BBC and ITV (Rixon 2011, p.74) has been challenged by other prominent TV news suppliers, such as Channel 4 and SKY. The key factors determining the choice of parallel weeknight bulletins on BBC1 and ITV1 at 10pm were as follows:

- **Audience size** - Comparable SKY and Channel 4 News bulletins attract fewer than 750,000 viewers each (Broadcasters Audience Research Board 2014; Turvill 2014). In contrast, the BBC1 and ITV1 weeknight 10pm bulletins habitually attract over 4 and 2 million viewers respectively (Broadcasters Audience Research Board 2014). They represent two of the most watched news bulletins (Ofcom 2015) and logically, those with considerable reach and influence.

- **Comparability** - Channel 4's weekday evening bulletin lasts 55 minutes, and SKY's 9pm weekday bulletin is part of a rolling news service, which means that it is difficult to consider in isolation without reference to what immediately preceeds and follows it. Both ITV1 and BBC1 bulletins have a fixed length and position in their respective channel's schedules, and have both been described as "flagship" (Wallis and Baran 1990; Barnett and Gaber 2001; Stanyer 2007). They are both part of mixed genre programming schedules, and are therefore directly comparable.
- **Availability** - There was a more complete archive of BBC1 and ITV1 bulletins at Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, and the *Box of Broadcasts* online resource<sup>1</sup>. One additional benefit of studying TV news bulletins from ongoing archives is that data can be revisited numerous times (Grasseni 2004). Some bulletins were completely unavailable within both archives, and these are listed in Appendix 1. Only weekday bulletins were included in the sample, since weekend bulletins are considerably shorter, often preoccupied with sport, and generally offer less detail. In sum, weekends represent "slow news days" (Gamson 1984, p.21; Stauffer 1994, p.127; Eastman and Ferguson 2012, p.262).

The choice of which years to analyse was also shaped by various factors. Most importantly, the unusual nature of the 2008 recession justified it as a key milestone around which to construct this research sample. First, 2007 was the last complete year before the financial crisis began during 2008. This "typical case" sample (Flick 1998, p.70; Deacon et al. 2007, p.55) enables examination of how EBF and PIE issues were reported during ordinary, "non-crisis" economic conditions.

In addition to the "control" year of 2007, 2014 provided the most recent complete year of coverage within the project timescale<sup>2</sup> and facilitated comparison (see Mason 2002) and a longitudinal narrative (Hodgetts et al. 2004) showing how EBF and PIE reporting evolved across this unusual period. Moreover, by 2014, economic growth returned to pre-crisis levels (BBC 2014), indicating that the financial crisis was ending

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<sup>1</sup> Box of Broadcasts (BOB) is an academic resource provided by the British University Film and Video Council. It is an historical archive of TV programmes, but in practice, before around 2012, there are considerable gaps in programme availability, and the 2007 archive was found to be generally inadequate. For 2007 therefore, broadcasts were sourced from the in house archive from Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies. For 2014, almost all broadcasts were available via BOB which is here <http://bobnational.net/>

<sup>2</sup> Data analysis phase was undertaken during 2015.

albeit the age of austerity it fostered still prevailed. Larger samples generate greater empirical confidence (Deacon et al. 2007); complete years (i.e. complete 12-month periods) were chosen on the basis that they would yield sufficient data for the various empirical phases.

#### **4.4 Research design: methodological choices, and complementing quantitative with qualitative methods.**

This interdisciplinary research blends insights from discrete academic realms (Repko 2012), and draws on journalism, business, management and organisational research. The design of the investigative process is fashioned by a critical realist approach, which recognises quantitative data as “revelatory”, “allowing connections to be made with known or conjectured generative processes” (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014, p.35). However, when research designs involve quantification, statistics are not always central (Mason 2002), as the compulsion to measure might often overlook substance (O’Malley et al. 2013), amid reflections that reality is imperfect and not easily categorised (Silverman 2006).

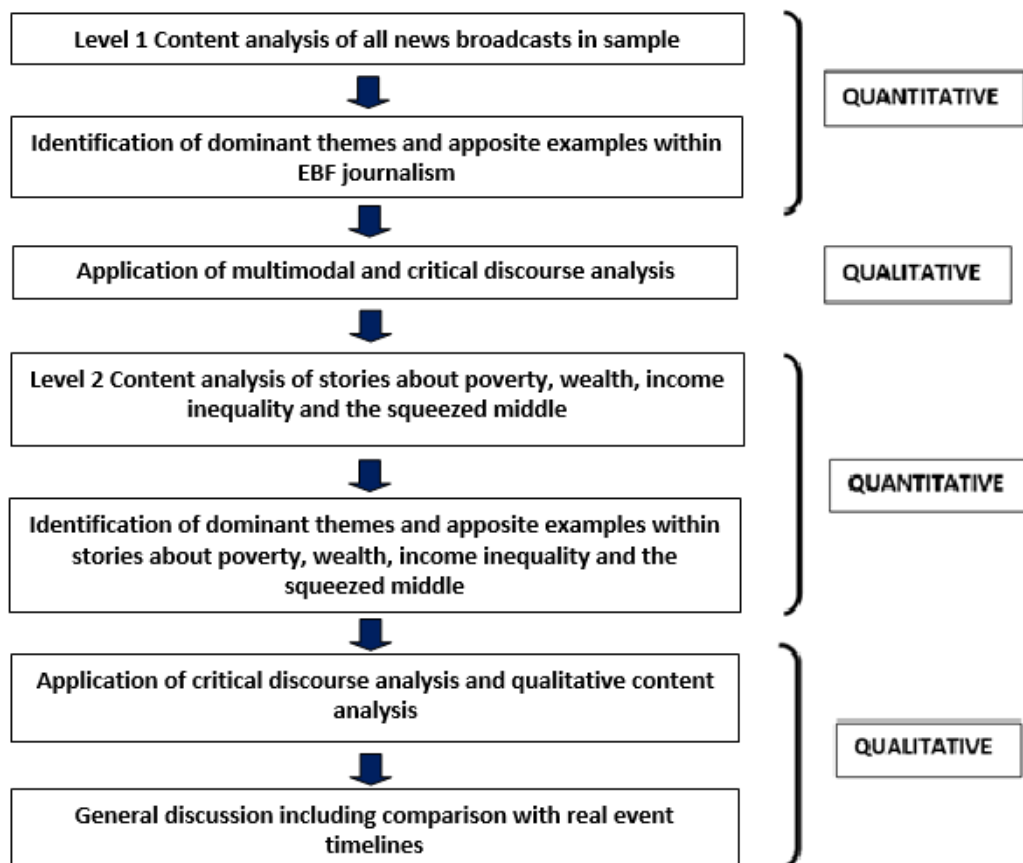
“Epistemological purity” may not be expedient (Miles and Huberman 1984, p.21), and tensions between quantitative and qualitative methods are now less distinct (Hurrell 2014). Consequently, these two approaches are now considered complementary rather than conflicting (Bryman 2004; Mason 1994), and methodological blending is increasingly legitimate, with critical realist research often characterised by eclecticism (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014; Hurrell 2014). The design of this research therefore, moves beyond traditional quantitative versus qualitative tensions (Flyvbjerg 2011), and the overly simplistic binary where quantification is associated with positivism, and qualitative methods with interpretivism (Sale et al. 2002; O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014). Moreover, conceptualising critical realism as bridging epistemological extremes further supports hybrid research, where objectives can be achieved by means of combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

By itself, quantitative research cannot adequately capture data richness, since statistics miss contextual detail, style, approach, tone, emotional impact, drama and so on. Accordingly, this research design can be described as quantitative moving towards qualitative, reflecting how results from one phase determine subsequent



phases (Greene et al. 1989; Bryman 2009). In practical and operational terms therefore, this study identifies the nature of broad news agendas and the location of EBF and PIE news stories. Quantitative analysis establishes the dominant themes evident within news coverage, and appropriate examples are then selected and subjected to qualitative analysis before a general discussion seeks to explain the research findings. The operational procedure is shown in Figure 4.1, and thereafter, elements are discussed separately.

**Figure 4.1. The research sequence.**



#### **4.5 Quantitative phases: using content analysis.**

In line with extant literature (see Chapter 3), preliminary investigation showed that PIE issues were almost always found as side issues within stories about a range of topics. Poverty, for example, might be briefly discussed within a report about welfare cuts, and wealth might be referred to during a report about corporate fraud. In short, they appeared rarely as the standalone focus of any news stories. Pragmatically, therefore, the generation of a meaningful sample necessitated the scrutiny of many news broadcasts. This process not only identified the location of specific PIE stories, it also generated a large dataset of general news, including EBF coverage. This data

enabled analysis and conclusions about aggregate news agendas, and approaches to EBF news in particular.

The study involved two levels of content analysis, described as the exact empirical quantification of observable phenomena (Priest 2009). Accordingly, this method was able to specifically and accurately identify the features that recurred in EBF and PIE news reports, as it employs systematic, predefined steps, describing social phenomena through coding of data and the noting of frequencies (Schreier 2014). The content analysis used Kerlinger's (2000) foundational model. Researcher axiology may determine what is measured and recorded, and so where possible, personal idiosyncrasies were removed to enable objective categorisation (Kerlinger 2000), avoiding "issues, topics and messages" included at the researcher's whim (MacNamara 2005, p.9). Any bias was mitigated as key variables were populated inductively, not ahead of, but *during* coding (see, inter alia, Neuendorf 2002; Bertrand and Hughes 2005; LeCompte and Schensul 2012). Rather than prejudging the causes of poverty for example, these were added as they occurred. Consequently, all possibilities were captured<sup>3</sup>, attenuating claims that researchers impose "meaning-systems" rather than objectively determining content (McQuail 1987, p.184).

Next, Kerlinger (2000) prescribes the systematic application of a repeatable framework (see also Wimmer and Dominick 2005; McNabb 2010). Such repeatability enables other researchers to replicate findings, assisted in this case by a comprehensive coding manual (see Appendix 2) providing operational definitions and category differences (Bryman and Bell 2007; Priest 2009). Furthermore, although single coder research is less problematic than multi-coder analysis, coding was applied consistently (Deacon et al. 2007), validated by reliability testing (Hansen and Machin 2013) conducted by another researcher with no prior project knowledge<sup>4</sup>. The researcher used the coding manual to process a sample and the results were then compared to those produced by the primary coder. The reliability testing

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<sup>3</sup> Categories with synergy, and with the obvious potential to be combined were later merged.

<sup>4</sup> The researcher in question was Dr Allaina Kilby, a researcher at Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies. Dr Kilby has considerable experience in large scale content analysis addressing topics such as the 2015 General Election and BBC-commissioned studies considering for example, how statistics are used within broadcast news, and how news attends to all parts of the U.K.

procedure is outlined in Appendix 3a, and full intercoder results are outlined in Appendix 3b<sup>5</sup>.

Notwithstanding the suitability of content analysis, there are some method associated challenges. There are suggestions that it is atheoretical, and deals only with what is measurable and observable (Royse 2004; Bryman and Bell 2007; Deacon et al. 2007). Recognising that reality exists beyond what is visible indicates that some elements may be missed by content analysis. Such unobservable elements could be absent social actor groups or indeed, the absence of pertinent events relating to poverty, wealth, income inequality or the squeezed middle. Attending to only what is manifest maps to a key characteristic of critical realism, in that reality may not always be observable. Accordingly, the discussion in Chapter 9 includes discussions concerning what EBF and PIE coverage *could have been*, compared to what it *was*.

#### **4.6 Level 1 Content Analysis: examining general news agendas and EBF news in particular.**

Content analysis provided the opportunity to identify dominant or absent features, and was conducted across two distinct phases. The coding system for Level 1 was influenced by a number of wide-ranging studies; many of the story types replicate those used by Barnett et al. (2000; 2012). However, other categories within these studies were deemed redundant for my research, and were removed while others were added. For example, “Northern Ireland” was removed as it was no longer a notable news story, but “Scottish Independence” was added because it was the subject of many news reports. Some other categories were merged, expanded and redefined to make the coding system both era and topic specific. The first phase of content analysis constituted an overall sweep of bulletins within the two sample years. This involved watching every single available weeknight 10pm news bulletin on BBC1 and ITV1 within the sample, and capturing rudimentary information about every news story<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Of the Krippendorff Alpha scores calculated for this study, four variables are between 0.77 and 0.80, which are described as “substantial” (Landis and Koch 1977, p.165). The remaining 12 scores are in excess of 0.81, which are described as “almost perfect” (Landis and Koch 1977, p.165).

<sup>6</sup> News “story” refers to the whole topic as reported in the news bulletin. In practice, each story might consist of several “items” - and anchor introduction, live interview, edited package and so on.

This phase had three objectives. First, it provided a record of all news stories enabling conclusions about the two respective news agendas. Secondly, it identified the location of all EBF news stories. Similar to the study by Shaw (2015), this research differentiates between business and financial journalism and accordingly, EBF news was identified and categorised thus:

- **Business Specific** - Business stories about organisations, individuals, or group of individuals within an organisation. For example, this might be “senior managers within Barclays”.
- **Business Generic** - Business stories relating to an industry sector or group of organisations, for example, “energy providers”.
- **Economy** - Stories relating to the general financial landscape. For example, this might include discussions about growth, inflation or interest rates.
- **Market Summary/Stock Exchange** - Stories relating to stock and currency markets. These are statistically-driven stories concerning the value of sterling, or share price fluctuations.

Thirdly, Level 1 analysis identified all stories with any “trace” of a PIE issue, which in turn represented the sample for the more probing Level 2 coding. Any “trace” was defined as reference to any of the four issues; income inequality for example, is often nested in a wide range of stories (McCall 2005), and although this phase involved many hours of viewing, it was necessary to watch every news story in every news bulletin. Level 1 analysis captured the following data:

- **Channel** - either ITV1 or BBC1.
- **Date** - the date of the bulletin.
- **Story Order** - the position of the story within the bulletin.
- **Length** - the duration of the story, in seconds.
- **Summary** - a short description capturing the implicit “headline”.
- **Subject** - the categorisation of the story (war, politics, business, sport and so on).

Using similar, though not identical subcategories to Kalogeropoulos et al. (2015), EBF stories only were subject to further coding:

- **Business subtopics** - the industry sector involved, such as energy, banking, pharmaceuticals and so on.

- **Economic subtopics** - the central issue, such as inflation, interest rates, growth and so on.
- **PIE** - any story (including non-EBF stories) containing reference to PIE issues.

As the bulletins were watched, data was directly recorded by hand into a series of formatted notebooks and then entered into an SPSS spreadsheet. SPSS is assistive software developed specifically for social science research and data analysis (Bryman and Cramer 1997; Huizingh 2007). The software enables the generation of simple frequency counts and incorporates filtering techniques enabling the isolation of channels, dates, topics, social actor contributors and so on. Such categories were also cross tabulated to identify relationships and associations between variables (see Chapters 5 and 7).

Coding is not linear (Deacon et al. 2007), and so extensive piloting refined the coding frame ahead of use<sup>7</sup>. There was no “double coding” (Barnett et al. 2000; Kalogeropoulos et al. 2014), instead “borderline” stories were classified according to the story’s main thrust; in practice stories were often about a range of issues, and in such cases, a judgement was made about the central and most prominent element. For example, reports covering budget announcements are often multi-faceted and may include discussions about measures affecting corporate affairs, personal taxation, fiscal planning or social issues. In this case, the most prominent element was selected, using a range of notional indicators such as the time spent, framing, the accompanying headline and so on. The comprehensive coding framework for the Level 1 coding analysis is outlined in Appendix 4.

#### **4.7 Level 2 Content Analysis: examining PIE issues in detail.**

The challenges associated with selecting appropriate texts for discourse analysis (Phillips and Di Domenico 2009) were overcome by Level 2 Content Analysis, which was designed to establish key themes, contributors and discourses. Pertinent stories identified by Level 1 were subjected to Level 2 analysis, the focus shifting from news generally to stories containing PIE references. As described, these themes are rarely central within news stories. Accordingly, measuring journalist or social actor contributions by time was impractical, since their interventions were often made in

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<sup>7</sup> A number of broadcasts were selected and recoded a number of times as the categories were refined.

passing. For example, a citizen might appear on screen for 30 seconds discussing increasing education costs, but only 5 seconds of this might be specifically about how a family's lifestyle had been compromised because of a reduction in discretionary income. Consequently, only spoken and visual data pertaining to PIE issues was captured, and not any extraneous data surrounding it.

Some variables contained well-defined categories. For example, whether contributors were political actors, third sector spokespeople or journalists, the geographical locations associated with stories, and so on. Other less clearly defined variables were populated inductively; the rationale was that by capturing every discourse, subtle variances would not be missed. It became clear that the range of causes, consequences, advocated actions and so on were diverse, and would have not comfortably fitted into a compressed range of pre-set choices. The next chapter (Chapter 5) discusses results in terms of categories that were conveniently merged at the conclusion of the data collection process. Level 2 Content Analysis added a range of information regarding the journalistic treatment of PIE issues:

- **Journalistic conventions** – PIE news stories were deconstructed by news convention. This was a deductive (pre-set) category embracing anchor reports, reporter packages, live interviews and so on (see Cushion and Thomas 2013). News stories sometimes included multiple items. For example, a story introduced by an anchor and the edited package<sup>8</sup> following it might both include references to poverty. This meant a smaller unit of analysis, enabling judgements about whether issues were covered in passing, in detail, or with some sense of immediacy (as in the case of live news, for example).
- **Name of reporter** - This category was populated inductively, adding names as they occurred.
- **Context** - If PIE issues were embedded within other stories, their level of prominence enabled conclusions about how such issues are covered. This was a deductive category; issues were considered “implied/in passing” or “substantive” to reflect the level of attention paid to the PIE topic within the news item. In the event of rich-poor comparisons, income inequality was the default category (full details in Appendix 2).

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<sup>8</sup> Short anchor introductions lasting a few seconds were included as part of the convention succeeding them – in other words, they were considered part of the edited package or live interview.

- **Area** - The geographical location referred to within the item was added inductively. If there was no specific area, stories were marked “generic”.
- **Causes** - If mentioned, PIE cause(s) were added inductively and as they occurred. As has been mentioned, causation, or *theories* of causation are key to critical realist research (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014).
- **Blame** - If PIE phenomena were blamed on some person, group or thing, these were added inductively. However, some explanation is required to differentiate “cause” from “blame”. The assigning of “blame” is achieved through language (Wiggins and Riley 2010; Sims-Schouten and Riley 2014) and occurs where a specific person or institution is ascribed agency. This might include for example, suggestions that a population had been “plunged into poverty” because of the specific actions of a political leader. “Cause” however, involves no personal agency or a more general reason - for example this might be increasing interest rates leading to reduced lifestyles.
- **Consequences** - The consequences of any of PIE issues were added inductively.
- **Actions** - If journalists advocated actions to counteract or solve PIE issues, these were also added inductively.
- **Other discourses** - If there were other sections of commentary not qualifying as cause, blame, consequence or action, then these were again added inductively. For example, suggestions that “the wealthy are greedy” would qualify in this category.
- **Images** - Any identifiable moving or static images *clearly* used to index PIE issues were added inductively. These may include food queues, expensive cars or homes, and so on.
- **Framing** - News items were categorised as being presented thematically, episodically, or using a mixture of both (see Chapter 2). For example, if poverty was expressed entirely through the lens of one family relying on food banks, then this was considered “episodic”. If the same issue was addressed entirely using a series of charts outlining global trends and policies, then “thematic” was chosen. Alternatively, if income inequality was described in terms of global data but included a short section where a specific wealthy person was juxtaposed with a poor one, this would be “mainly thematic”.
- **Metrics** - If PIE issues were expressed using numeric measures, these were added deductively. For example, if ordinary people were pushed nearer poverty by

spiralling interest rates, then “interest rates” would be added as a metric (and in such a case, it would also be coded as “a cause”).

In addition, if other social actors besides journalists were featured, the following information was collected:

- **Type of actor** - This inductive category described whether contributors were politicians, businesspeople, ordinary citizens and so on, facilitating understandings to what extent influential voices or “primary definers” dominate (Allan 2004, p.71).
- **Political party** - For politicians, affiliated political parties were added inductively.
- **Causes** - As described above.
- **Blame** - As described above.
- **Consequences** - As described above.
- **Actions** - As described above.
- **Other discourses** - As described above.
- **Images** - As described above.
- **Framing** - As described above.
- **Metrics** - As described above.
- **Notes** - Additional notes were made where appropriate; this was to capture extra-ordinary information not otherwise accommodated by the coding framework.

The items subjected to Level 2 Content Analysis were scrutinised in detail several times, and a coding sheet was developed during piloting. The final coding sheet is detailed in Appendix 4. A separate sheet was physically completed by hand for each discrete news item, and the data was entered into the same master SPSS spreadsheet described in the explanation for Level 1 Content Analysis. Where categories were developed inductively, all were entered into the SPSS spreadsheet, category merging taking place at the analysis stage<sup>9</sup>. As the major instrument of data

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<sup>9</sup> The third party who carried out the intercoder checking was given a spreadsheet containing the narrower range of refined, merged categories which are used for the data analysis in Chapters 5 and 7.



storage, when in use, the SPSS spreadsheet was saved regularly in three separate locations<sup>10</sup> which were all password protected.

#### **4.8 Qualitative Phase: wider understandings of discourse, and the choice of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).**

Content analysis determines the thrust of the textual analysis following it (Punch 2005). Accordingly, qualitative analysis “rehumanizes” statistical findings (Gephart 2004, p.455) and adds “richness and nuance” (Mason 2002, p.3). This qualitative analysis examines typical case models containing the key elements identified by the two phases of content analysis, in order to add the dimension of *how* (the way news is reported), to *what* (the type of news that is reported). The concept of discourse is central to the qualitative phase, albeit definitions of discourse across disciplines reveal significant variance (Phillips and Hardy 2002; Sandoval 2006; Phillips and Di Domenico 2009).

To simplify, Gee (1999) subdivides “discourse” into “big D” and “small d”. “Big D” discourses are the integration of “language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools and objects” to create a “socially recognizable identity” (Gee 1999, p.21). “Small d” discourses in contrast, refer to “language-in-use or stretches of language like conversation or stories” (Gee 1999, p.26). Gee’s definition is helpful in that it demonstrates that discourse extends beyond language (“small d”) to embrace broader concepts of how objects, phenomena and identities are perceived (“Big D”). This breadth of meaning can be synthesised into “discourse” being the general reasoning and concepts offered by texts (Wodak 2001), operating beyond grammatical levels and attending to “social, political and cultural arenas” (Simpson and Mayr 2010, p.5).

Understandings of critical approaches to discourse are informed by Foucault (Phillips and Di Domenico 2009; Graham 2012). He suggested that groups of statements provide general frameworks within which meaning is constructed (Foucault 1972), amounting to a “regime of truth” (Hall 2003, p.49). In the consequent “corpus of knowledge” (Foucault 1972, p.33), some interpretations are accentuated, while alternatives are excluded or marginalised (Carabine 2001; Robinson and Groves 2007). Mapping such theories specifically to this research, TV news coverage of PIE

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<sup>10</sup> These were pen drive, Cardiff University hard drive space and a cloud storage platform.

issues develops particular discursive presentations. Operationally, these are established through commentaries, sound bites, interviews and visual dimensions including images, videos, graphics and situational backdrops. For example, some discourses may present income inequality as an acceptable by-product of capitalism, or the fault of a particular group, while also showing explanations, descriptions and advocacies to be right/wrong or desirable/undesirable (Schöpflin 2010).

In isolation, descriptive statistics are inadequate (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014), as they ignore for example, the language used in news reporting. “Inequality” for example, may be considered to be a pejorative word, whereas “gap” may not evoke the same reaction (Ryscavage 2009, p.15). Language therefore, can present the same phenomena in various ways, some of them extreme (Potter and Wetherell 1987, p.35). Those texts selected from the Level 2 Content Analysis for further qualitative study were those best exemplifying emergent themes.

Discourse analysis is an “umbrella” term (Sims-Schouten and Riley 2014, p.46) embracing sub-disciplines that often share objectives (Wood and Kroger 2000). As discussed, Foucault’s influence appears omnipresent within several of these different approaches. There is synergy for example, between Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) and the chosen method for this research - Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Both are politically and ideologically motivated and deal with meaning within texts (Wooffitt 2005). Indeed, Cook’s (2008, p.217) description of FDA as attending to “how language is used by doctors, parents, the media and government to subordinate and marginalize...” resonates with CDA’s objective to analyse how minorities and the underrepresented are presented by the powerful (Van Dijk 1998; Harding 2006). As demonstrated in Figure 4.1, both levels of quantitative content analysis were followed by qualitative analysis. This took the form of a multimodal analysis, embracing the complementary approaches of Critical Discourse and Visual analyses.

This study uses critical and multimodal analyses as they extend beyond FDA’s focus on process (Foucault 1982; Wooffitt 2005; Hulme 2014). Within critical realism, discourse analysis locates social actor sense making within “socio-historic-economic-linguistic communities” which accordingly “are informed by institutional structures” (Sims-Schouten and Riley 2014, p.64). Wooffitt (2005) helpfully elaborates, noting

that FDA does not connect process to social mechanisms (see also Dean 1999). CDA, therefore, embraces a forensic approach to language, syntax and lexicons, taking the “linguistic turn” (Hewitt 2009, p.2), and interpreting findings within wider backdrops (Taylor 2004). Further, CDA has emancipatory objectives (Mautner 2010; Fairclough 2001) moving towards intervention (Tenorio 2011); any critical theory without such a call to action is vividly described as “bankrupt on its own terms” (Leonard 1990, p. 3). The commitment to identify how news producers generate “top down” messages is an important feature of this examination of the elite-dominated practice of EBF and PIE reporting, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. CDA logically extends critical realism’s concern with how structures condition actions and behaviour. The progression from epistemology to methodology can be summarised thus:

*Some critical realists engage in critical discourse analysis, developing a critical realist approach to discourse and semiotics that allows for scientific treatment of how intersubjective meanings serve structural interests with, for example, ideas in management about individuals being commodities serving capitalist structures... (Cruickshank 2012, p.77).*

In seeking to examine where power lies within EBF and PIE news reports, CDA establishes how through discourse, this power and ideology is propagated and preserved (Van Dijk 1993; Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997; Machin and Mayr 2012), and which social actors may be marginalised in the process. More specifically, CDA seeks to expose hidden meaning and challenge naturalised power (Tenorio 2011).

The well-established three-dimensional model for applying CDA is similar to the framework adopted to structurally organise Chapters 2 and 3 (see Figure 2.1). Philosophically consistent with critical realism (Farrelly 2010), the model attends to the textual development of inequality and power (Fairclough 1992; 1995). While the first dimension considers the text itself, the second considers the circumstances of its production and the “inner worlds from which discourse springs” (Marshak et al. 2000, p.245). The final dimension considers the wider backdrop and “social and cultural goings-on” (Fairclough’s 1995, p.57); these could range from government or multinational policies to individual circumstances (Sims-Schouten and Riley 2014). Practical, operational and regulatory constraints within news organisations (Hansen and Machin 2013) might also be included in addition to the prevailing socioeconomic

and political environment. Moreover, and resonant with critical realism, Fairclough (2001) asserts that CDA addresses elements of unseen reality, since it considers connections between language and the contexts within which it exists, even if these are unobservable. Omissions in speech - for example, the lack of discussion about causality, consequences or blame in PIE reports - are equally important as what is actually present, since it is “difficult to raise questions about something that is not even ‘there’” (Huckin 1997, p.82).

CDA reveals how PIE issues were addressed by those contributing to reports, how those holding power might affect it (Wodak 2001), and how social actors attempt to persuade audiences to think of issues in certain terms, often using implicit, rather than explicit intentions (see Hansen and Machin 2013). Despite print journalism being more widely researched than TV reporting (Hulme 2014), broadcast news offers “fluent, intelligible versions of the world” (Montgomery 2007, p.20). In TV news research, CDA has been used to examine, for example, political speech on Swedish TV news (Ekstrom 2001), how African-Americans were represented in coverage of Hurricane Katrina (Johnson et al. 2010) and the SARS crisis on TV news in Belgium (Joye 2010).

CDA is well-suited for studying TV news since the “reflective commentary” of broadcast news considers “bias, (mis)representation, inaccuracy, distortion, ideology... dumbing-down” and “selective construction” (Montgomery 2007, p.20). The forensic examination of the minutiae of speech can also be analysed using the method of conversation analysis. However, this generally considers extempore speech rather than scripted news reporting (Markee 2000). Furthermore, there are concerns that it does not extend beyond the analysis of “moment-to-moment understandings” (Greatbatch 2009, p.495) and makes no connections to wider societal contexts (Wooffitt 2005; Titscher et al. 2000).

However, speech only partly accounts for information imparted by TV news. In contrast to written copy, video maximises news producer intentions (Tuchman 1978), and despite suggestions that speech is the primary information carrier within TV news (Deacon et al. 2007), visual data might be even more expressive and memorable than verbal data (Graber 1990; Warren 2009). Images are “highly salient” (Gilens, 1996, p.528), can dominate stories (Robinson et al. 2009) and must therefore

be considered as an equally important site for analysis as the words they often accompany.

#### 4.8.1 Semiotic carriers of meaning.

If texts are understood in “normal pragmatic ways, inferring meanings” (Widdowson 2000, p.22), images also carry meaning. Consequently, analysing TV news calls for methods capable of accommodating these different modes. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) advocate that CDA should be dynamic and capable of transcending disciplines. In sum, this research adopted a strategy where linguistic analysis is combined with the examination of images, captions, locations and objects via the fundamental principles of semiotic analysis (Barthes 1973; 1977). The purely descriptive denotative level of analysis is descriptive and one dimensional, while the second, connotative level embraces associated cultural concepts (Machin 2007). The most general and abstract level of analysis - what Barthes (1973) calls “myth” - attends to “social messages” (Bignell 2002, p.22).

Within TV news bulletins, for example, meaning is carried by icons often featuring clocks, countdowns, maps and spinning planets to establish notions of speed, technological sophistication and worldwide coverage (Machin 2007). News anchors sitting behind desks connote notions of traditional authority (Machin 2007) and “live” interventions from war zones or in front of legislative buildings add feelings of credibility and authenticity (Lewis 2013a).

The study adopts a multimodal approach, which recognises that language and images are analysed on the basis that they are choices made from an available spectrum (see, inter alia, Hodge and Kress 1988; Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996, 2001; Machin and Mayr 2012). If news constructs reality (Potter 2010), EBF and PIE reporting will be represented by visual and verbal versions of the “truth” as determined by TV news editors and journalists. As a series of conscious or unconscious choices, TV reports include particular elements of reality while others are excluded or marginalised (Montgomery 2007).

Without critical and ideologically-motivated approaches, such social problems might never be addressed (Richardson 2007), but CDA is more versatile than a simple left-to-right critique; right-wing causes could use its techniques for analysing left-wing

ideology (Widdowson 1998). Indeed, objects subjected to CDA do not have to be weighty or political topics at all (Wodak and Meyer 2009). In response to claims that CDA and multimodal analysis is not systematic and consistent, within its wide myriad of “tools”, only some of these were used to analyse reports containing traces of PIE issues. In brief, the specific range of analytical CDA “tools” include presupposition, lexical choice, and rhetorical devices including metaphor, modality, and absence. These elements of CDA are detailed and defined in the Glossary in Appendix 5, which also outlines the elements within images also determined to carry ideological messages.

In order to demonstrate how images and language work together, in qualitative data analysis Chapters 6 and 8, analysed speech is shown alongside corresponding screenshots (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995), taking a more general approach than frame-by-frame analysis (Belk and Kozinets 2005). In research into poverty on TV news, simple transcripts do not capture the rich additional data offered by graphics and moving images (Kim et al. 2010).

#### **4.9 Supplementary interview providing the practitioner viewpoint.**

Qualitative data in particular yielded some unexpected results concerning ITV1’s approach to EBF news and their relationships with their advertisers. Though not envisaged as part of the original research design, given critical realism’s flexible research ethos, it was decided that a semi-structured interview would allow further interrogation of these particular findings. Within critical realism, interviews are used to discover background structures and environments (Smith and Elger 2014).

Accordingly, contact was made with a senior executive at ITV News and Current Affairs<sup>11</sup> and the request for an interview was granted. This face-to-face encounter offered the opportunity to access a particular point of view in terms of attitude and experience (Smith and Elger 2014, p.110); the interviewee was a practitioner with specific and perhaps unique knowledge, rather than someone subjected to the policies and strategies of others (Pawson and Tilley 1997). One-to-one interviews are well-established within media research (Flick 1998), and recognise individual context (Kvale 1996); it was explained to the interviewee that the topic for discussion would

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<sup>11</sup> The executive was Michael Jerney, Head of ITV News and Current Affairs.

be the relationship between ITV1's news department and those paying for the advertising punctuating its bulletins. The agreement to participate and associated conditions are outlined in Appendix 6.

In this case, the interviewer was a "miner" of information rather than a "traveller" on a shared journey (Legard et al. 2003, p.139). Some degree of interviewer "steering" was required to ensure that the discussion remained focused on meeting research objectives (Arksey and Knight 1999), and this was achieved by means of a semi-structured interview schedule (Deacon et al. 2007) containing pre-determined questions functioning as discussion prompts.

One potential concern was that the interviewee might adopt a defensive position towards the questions and the questioner, especially given the currently beleaguered nature of the journalism profession. There is "no intimacy without reciprocity" (Oakley 1981, p.49), and the recommendation given by a colleague<sup>12</sup> established a friendly and relaxed introduction. This facilitated a face-to-face encounter conducive to obtaining useful data (Legard et al. 2003), also the provision of additional "non-verbal data" such as gestures not evident within telephone interviews (Jones 2004). Despite notions that interviewees might respond with popular, acceptable answers (Hopmann et al. 2010), the interviewee was reflexive and candid, much like the journalists interviewed by Fahy et al. (2010) and Doyle (2007). In sum, this interview was not a comparison between personal versions of events, but an opportunity to triangulate data from other methods used in this research (Deacon et al. 2007). Furthermore, given the interviewee's professional eminence, the interview generated data unavailable elsewhere (Mason 2002, p.66).

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations.**

The research was subject to conditions set out within the Research Governance Framework for Cardiff University. The official document giving full ethical approval is shown in Appendix 7. Under the model of potential research threats (Ghauri and Gronhaug 2002), the sample was not impacted by the research, since analysis began after the broadcasts had entered the public domain. Furthermore, the content and

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<sup>12</sup> An introduction was given by Prof Richard Sambrook Cardiff School of Journalism, Media Cultural Studies. Unfortunately, requests to equivalent executives from BBC1 failed to elicit any response.

discourse analysis data did not include anything that could be private, personal, sensitive or potentially damaging to any person or organisations.

Research involving human participants is very common within organisational research involve (Saunders et al. 2009), but content and multimodal analyses enable researchers to retain the control not always possible when human participants are involved. Consequently, wider ethical, reliability and operational concerns (see Babbie 1998; Gravetter and Forzano 2012) were largely avoided but for one interview, and official university ethics protocols were followed in terms of consent and appropriate briefing. The problematic and complex issue of anonymity (Deacon et al. 2007) was avoided, since the interviewee agreed to participate on the basis of his professional role.

The storage of data throughout the research process was driven by imperatives of expediency and efficiency rather than any security concerns. Spreadsheets were duplicated and stored safely and securely in multiple locations that were password protected, and broadcast DVDs and coding sheets were stored in locked cabinets accessible only by the primary researcher.

In conclusion, the addition of an interview was the final element in a process of data collection. This sequence of procedures was designed to reveal the efficacy of TV news coverage of EBF and PIE issues, and whether BBC1 and ITV1 meet their public service obligations. Underpinned by the principles of critical realism to discover and then explain, this research can also be considered the first step in an emancipatory project whereby, before news reporting can improve, its shortcomings must be identified and understood. In the same way that this research design embraces quantification and qualification, the chapters that follow reveal the extent to which BBC1 and ITV1 provide the quantity and quality of news coverage, and whether these are appropriate and befitting of “one of the great debates of our age”.



## **Chapter 5. What's the story? BBC1 and ITV1 news agendas in 2007 and 2014.**

As explained in Chapter 4, in order to identify PIE new stories, it was necessary to conduct a wide sweep of bulletins and aggregate news agendas. This chapter determines what types of stories were covered in weeknight 10pm bulletins on BBC1 and ITV1 in 2007 and 2014, and what trends and characteristics were present. Ahead of the specific analysis of PIE issues in subsequent chapters (Chapters 7 and 8), this chapter establishes the extent to which EBF news features within these bulletins, and the similarities and differences between channels.

Findings indicate that in addition to a general convergence in terms of format and content, there was an increase in EBF news across both channels, consistent with the increase in serious news more generally. This chapter begins with a description of news in the broadest of terms, and moves on to look at the formats, types and conventions of all news, with a particular focus on EBF reporting.

### **5.1 Quantity and format of 10pm bulletins on BBC1 and ITV1 in 2007 and 2014.**

In all, 872 news bulletins were subjected to Level 1 Content Analysis. Some bulletins were missing from the archive or unavailable online<sup>1</sup>; in 2007 particularly, the incomplete archive had some impact. For example, in May 2007, local elections in Wales, Scotland and England and the disappearance of British toddler Madeleine McCann dominated news schedules. Unfortunately, many pertinent bulletins were unavailable, meaning that these particular events were generally absent within the research sample. In order to mitigate the impact of missing data, statistics throughout this analysis are expressed as percentages of wider news agendas, rather than as raw numbers.

The ways that TV news delivers messages must be considered alongside the messages themselves, so following the protocol established by Harrison (2000), this TV news content analysis attends to both *format* (conventions, story lengths and so

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<sup>1</sup> All bulletins that were unavailable from both the DVD archive at Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies and the Box of Broadcast online resource are listed in Appendix 1.

on), and *content* (type of news covered). The analysis begins by focusing on *format*. At this stage, the unit of analysis is the broader news story, rather than the more specific news item<sup>2</sup>. Table 5.1 shows the total number of bulletins logged as a percentage of the total per year, the number of individual stories and average stories per bulletin.

**Table 5.1. Overview of bulletins and stories.**

Channel	Year	Weeknight bulletins logged	Weeknight bulletins broadcast	Percentage	Stories logged	Average stories per bulletin
BBC1	2007	212	260	81.5	2054	9.7
	2014	245	260	94.2	2350	9.6
ITV1	2007	171	260	65.8	1882	11.0
	2014	244	260	93.8	3048	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>1040</b>	<b>83.8</b>	<b>9334</b>	<b>10.7</b>

Table 5.1 indicates that in both years, ITV1 covers more stories per bulletin than BBC1. In 2014 for example, it covers almost three more stories per bulletin. In order to capture news data accurately, non-news elements such as idents, mid-bulletin summaries and warnings of forthcoming stories were not coded (Brunsdon and Morley 1978). Therefore, only real news has been counted, and Table 5.2 provides temporal detail.

**Table 5.2. Sample and average lengths of bulletins across channels and years.**

Channel	Year	Total time logged (secs)	Stories logged	Mean time per story (secs)	Median (secs)	Mode (secs)
BBC1	2007	300,483	2054	146.3	147	17
	2014	370,304	2357	157.6	157	19
ITV1	2007	222,400	1882	118.2	104	17
	2014	373,715	3041	122.5	131	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>1266902*</b>	<b>9334</b>	<b>135.7</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>19</b>

Given their compressed format, TV bulletins are carefully arranged and packaged (Cushion et al. 2014), and an apparently long-standing shift towards shorter TV news stories (Gitlin 1980; Hallin 1994) prompts concerns that less information will be

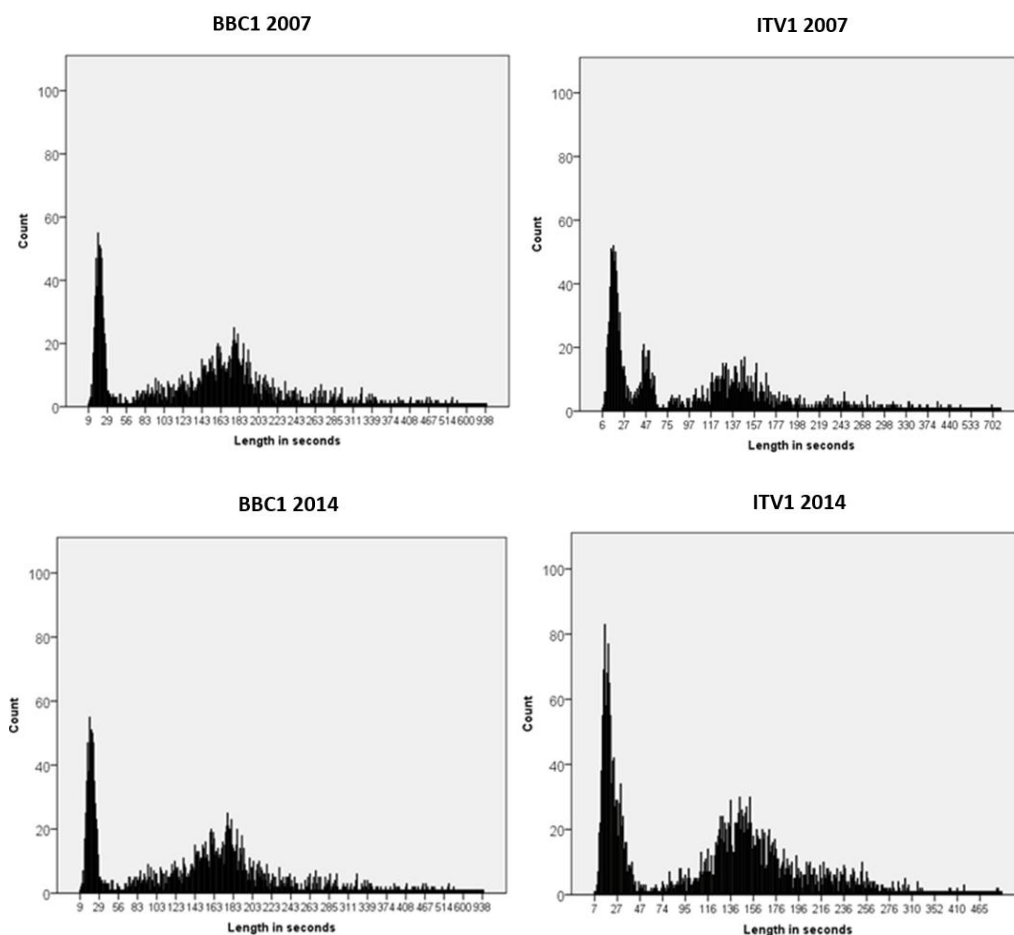
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<sup>2</sup> “Stories” and “items” are different. In summary, a news “story” refers to the whole topic as reported in the bulletin. In practice, a story might consist of several “items”, which might be an anchor introduction, a live interview, an edited package and so on.

disseminated (Harrison 2000). The data presented in Table 5.2 does not support this, since both BBC1 and ITV1 increased their average story lengths between 2007 and 2014. This represents a considerable increase in average story lengths from 1996 for example, when late evening bulletin averages were 120 seconds on BBC, and 96 seconds on ITV (Harrison 2000), and also compared to 2002, when averages were 126 seconds on BBC and 90 seconds on ITV (Hargreaves and Thomas 2002).

ITV1 average story lengths are similar to those found by Montgomery (2007), but average lengths of BBC1 stories are appreciably longer in both years, consistent with the channel featuring fewer stories. Irrespective of any advertising breaks not included in news time, ITV1 have increased both the number of stories per bulletin and average time per story. Adding further detail, Figure 5.1 shows the lengths and frequencies of all stories on each channel in each year.

**Figure 5.1 The distribution of item lengths in 2007 and 2014.**



Figures 5.1 indicates that in terms of story lengths, there is a strong degree of homogeneity across channels and years. In all cases apart from ITV1 in 2007, these

are bimodal distributions. The tallest spike in each chart indicates that for both channels and in both years, the modal (most popular) story length is between 16 and 19 seconds. In all cases, again apart from ITV1 in 2007, the next most prominent story length is around 180 seconds on BBC1, and around 150 seconds on ITV1. BBC1 news stories therefore, tend to be longer in both years, despite ITV1 increasing both story time average and number of stories per bulletin. These increases within the same ITV1 bulletin are possibly due to less advertising breaks, and less summaries, adverts and trailers resulting in increased “news time”.

The disturbance to the general pattern of homogeneity is the additional spike evident in the chart showing ITV1 lengths in 2007. Here, stories 49 and 50 seconds long were the second most popular length after the usual 16-19 second mode. Further analysis reveals that 29 of the 38 stories lasting 49 or 50 seconds were previews of the following morning’s newspaper headlines. This is entirely an ITV1-specific convention and one not featured on BBC1. The additional ITV1 spike had disappeared by 2014, and the mean average for the newspaper preview drops from 48.1 seconds in 2007 to 31.8 seconds in 2014. The disappearance of the 2007 spike, and the return to the neater bimodal pattern in 2014 can be therefore explained by ITV1 spending less time previewing newspapers. When interviewed for this study, ITV Head of News and Current Affairs Michael Jerney<sup>3</sup> recalled that truncating the convention was not “a profound statement about newspapers, it’s more about making better use of the time we have...”. This suggests that ITV1 made specific efforts to increase the efficiency of their news delivery.

Previous research by Harrison (2000) describes how *ITN News at Ten* contained a summary of news events late in the bulletins where the featured headlines had been previously covered during the bulletin. In 2007 and 2014 however, the ITV1 headline convention usually referred to newspaper headlines not featured elsewhere within the bulletin. Further contrasting with BBC1 covering fewer stories for longer, and supported by the words of Michael Jerney, it could be concluded that ITV1 covers a wider news agenda, first by addressing more stories, then by supplementing them with a newspaper preview, referring, albeit fleetingly, to more stories not referred to elsewhere in the bulletin.

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<sup>3</sup> The full transcript of this interview is found in Appendix 8.

Moving now to address the prevalence of shorter stories, the following are examples of stories covered by the modal length in each year:

***Tony Blair's urging of new Labour principles*** (2/1/07, BBC1)

***The "cash for honours" row*** (25/1/07, BBC1)

***Violence in Ukraine*** (13/6/14, ITV1)

***Bank of England rate-setters surprised at reaction to interest rate decision*** (18/6/14, ITV1)

***President Obama suggests that US may pull out of Afghanistan*** (25/2/14, BBC1)

***Government minister Jeremy Hunt announces Mid Staffs NHS trust to be dissolved*** (26/2/14, BBC1)

***Deadlock in Syria peace talks*** (27/1/14, ITV1)

***Barclays Bank in "rate-fixing" Libor scandal*** (17/2/14, ITV1)

Based on these examples above, claims that only trivial stories are covered briefly cannot be supported. Instead, major stories might be featured fleetingly merely to retain them within wider news agendas, even if these stories have temporarily "gone quiet". However, this explanation seems inappropriate for the significant episodes outlined above, concerning, for example, Obama's suggestion, the Bank of England's reaction, and Jeremy Hunt's announcement. None of these stories appears to be experiencing a "lull", confirming that the space or time given to stories does not correlate with their importance, and that they might instead be shortened in the interests of bulletin "balance".

Despite TV news audiences preferring *longer* items (Rosentiel et al. 1999), there might also be practical and operational reasons for covering such significant events so briefly. First, short news items reflect assumptions about viewer attention span, and the need for simplicity to satisfy fitful audiences (Williams 1998; Barnett 2012). The model of TV news comprising short, self-contained and isolated elements (van Ginneken 1998) can be elaborated further, since shorter items are arranged in particular ways. Figure 5.2 shows how these stories are often clustered together and involve a wide range of topics.

**Figure 5.2 Examples of “short item clustering” across channels and years.**

		Running order	Length (secs)
ITV 10/1/2007	Woman and 2 children murdered in London	5	18
	Helicopter accident in Shropshire	6	13
	Pakistani schoolgirl flees mother in Britain	7	15
	George Michael motoring offence	8	16
ITV 3/7/2007	Pakistan violence 9 dead	3	18
	Armed forces recruitment crisis	4	16
	Cadbury guilty food hygiene	5	16
	Pete Docherty guilty	6	11
	Bush accused of nepotism	7	142
	Markets	8	19
	Football	9	23
	Tennis	10	14
ITV 30/6/2014	Obama sends troops to Iraq	3	23
	Andy Coulson faces retrial	4	11
	McCann disappearance	5	14
BBC 1/10/2007	UBS bank will write off billions	4	19
	Mortgages are down	5	13
	Menezes killing enquiry	6	137
	Putin will run for parliament	7	18
	Less civilians killed in Iraq	8	19
BBC 1/7/2014	Ukraine resume action after ceasefire	4	21
	UKIP protest in Strasbourg	5	24
	ISIS leader calls for action	6	213
	McCann disappearance	7	19
BBC 24/7/14	IMF - UK economy is growing - pre recess...	4	22
	Ofgem increases compensation for power ...	5	22
	Sudanese woman freed from prison meets...	6	34

Grouping short stories might be explained by the requirement for fast-paced TV news. However, while such brevity might appease audiences and commercial imperatives, the practice might also define TV news as featuring headlines but no substance (Mosey 2004; Barnett 2012). Irrespective of TV news conventions, it cannot be denied that late evening bulletins are a major source of public knowledge (Cushion 2012; Barnett et al. 2012; Ofcom 2015) and “a force to be reckoned with” in terms of providing citizens with information (Schaap 2009, p.2)

## 5.2 EBF news : less data-driven.

Turning next to Economic, Financial and Business (EBF) news, Table 5.3 shows the frequencies of stories and the corresponding mean and median lengths in seconds across years and channels.

**Table 5.3 Frequencies, means and medians of EBF categories (in seconds).**

	2007			2014		
	BBC1		ITV1	BBC1		ITV1
<b>Business Specific stories</b>	<b>85</b>		<b>53</b>	<b>103</b>		<b>107</b>
Mean (secs)	114.4		115.9	114.8		112.6
Median (secs)	123.0		126.0	138.0		130
<b>Generic Business stories</b>	<b>45</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>74</b>		<b>56</b>
Mean	142.5		140.5	135.3		134.3
Median	142.0		143.0	163.0		146.5
<b>Economy stories</b>	<b>43</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>85</b>		<b>74</b>
Mean	169.7		207.7	185.4		154.4
Median	169.0		172.0	179.0		149.5
<b>Market summary stories</b>	<b>14</b>		<b>151</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>4</b>
Mean	92.5		23.8	134.0		122.5
Median	78.0		20.0	134.0		72.5
<b>Total all EBF stories</b>	<b>187</b>		<b>244</b>	<b>263</b>		<b>241</b>
Mean	132.2		67.1	143.5		130.6
Median	138.0		22.0	160.0		143.0
<b>Total minus market summary</b>			<b>93</b>			
Mean			137.7			
Median			137.0			

Table 5.3 shows that the focus on EBF categories further amplifies the emerging trend of homogeneity, particularly within specific and generic business stories. In 2007 on ITV1, there were only 15 *Economy* stories, meaning that the issue was confined to an occasional feature rather than being the subject of any routine coverage. The gap between the mean time (207.7 seconds) and the median time (172.0 seconds) further indicates the existence of a few particularly long items, underpinning the “special event” status of the *Economy*, and perhaps, a stable pre-crisis financial climate. As ITV1 *Economy* stories increase in 2014, the mean story time reflects more regular and routine coverage.

The exception to the homogenous pattern is ITV1’s *Market Summary/Stock Exchange*. ITV1’s focus on statistical data about shares, markets and currencies reflects descriptions of market fluctuations being “ritualistic” (Svennevig 2007, p.10).

The *Market Summary/Stock Exchange* convention clearly distorts the overall average for 2007 (67.1 seconds). Without this convention (see bottom of Table 5.3), the homogeneous pattern of mean and median times is restored.

In sum, including EBF news and with few exceptions, both channels have resisted the urge to truncate story lengths. The abandonment of the *Market Summary/Stock Exchange* is an early indicator (in terms of conventions only at this stage) that EBF reporting on ITV1 has shifted from short, data-driven interventions to longer reports. This humanisation of EBF news is defined as a new focus on unpredictable and irregular human elements rather than quantitative data which can be extrapolated into forecasts and predictions. In sum, while there is a “diverse range of terrestrial news formats, news philosophies and news values” (Harrison 2000, p.106), in terms of EBF story lengths, this cannot be supported by the data presented here. The general theme of homogeneity can be further developed by considering bulletin *content*.

### **5.3 Content of TV news bulletins: more EBF news, and a change of approach?**

Level 1 Content Analysis provides a detailed backdrop of aggregate news agendas and identifies the locations of EBF and PIE stories. During the process, 9,338 news stories were logged across two channels and two years, and each was assigned to one of 38 different news types (see Appendix 2).

The developed taxonomy of categories includes “hardy annuals” such as *Crime*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *Sport*, in addition to contemporary and specific issues-of-the-day including *Scottish Independence*. Well-established categories were modified to accommodate changing world events; most notably, *Terror* was added to *War/Conflict*, since terrorism and war are often indistinguishable. Table 5.1 indicates that these news bulletins feature between 9.6 and 12.5 stories, versus around 300 found in an average newspaper (Hanley 2009). Consequently, perhaps conclusions about TV news agendas are more robust than those made about print news; these dozen or so stories, according to agenda setting theories, are those that audiences are being asked to think *about* (McCombs and Shaw 1972). Moreover, while watching news “live”, viewers are unable to pass over items quite so easily as is possible for newspaper readers (Lewis 1991). Table 5.4 shows the comprehensive BBC1 and ITV1 news agendas by channel and year, as determined by the major



categories. These are measured by frequency of categories expressed as a percentage of total new stories (F), and the total length of categories expressed as a percentage of total news time (T).

**Table 5.4 News bulletin content by category (shown in terms of percentage and with EBF categories highlighted in green)<sup>4</sup>.**

	<b>2007</b>				<b>2014</b>			
<b>Total time</b>	<b>300,483</b>	<b>222,400</b>			<b>371,535</b>	<b>372,424</b>		
<b>Total stories</b>	<b>2054</b>	<b>1882</b>			<b>2357</b>	<b>3041</b>		
	<b>F= % Frequency T= % Time</b>				<b>F= % Frequency T= % Time</b>			
	<b>BBC1</b>		<b>ITV1</b>		<b>BBC1</b>		<b>ITV1</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>
War/Conflict/Terror	14.8	14.6	13.4	17.7	15.6	21.4	14.0	19.5
Crime*	13.0	11.2	12.9	14.1	12.7	9.9	11.2	9.3
Foreign Affairs	10.7	12.7	6.2	8.7	9.0	9.1	7.0	8.6
Sport	5.6	4.4	12.5	7.9	8.4	5.9	12.2	8.5
Political process/ policy/ obituaries	8.7	10.2	5.7	7.7	8.7	10.3	7.1	8.5
Home Affairs	4.8	5.0	2.3	3.1	3.9	3.5	2.9	3.0
Accident / Disaster/ Tragedy	4.5	3.1	3.6	3.1	4.5	3.3	4.6	4.0
Business Specific	4.1	3.2	2.8	2.8	4.5	3.3	3.4	3.1
Weather / consequences of	2.7	3.3	2.0	3.6	1.9	2.6	1.6	2.8
Health / Disease / Research	2.6	2.9	1.4	1.3	4.0	4.4	3.4	3.9
Royal Family	2.4	2.2	1.8	2.0	1.2	0.8	1.5	1.3
Generic Business	2.2	2.1	1.3	1.6	3.1	2.7	1.8	2.0
Animal related	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.7	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.5
Economy	2.1	2.4	0.8	1.4	3.6	4.2	2.4	3.1
Media	2.0	1.9	2.2	2.3	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.6
Remaining categories total	17.6	18.6	28.9	20.0	17.8	17.9	25.7	22.3
Totals*	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100

The data presented in Table 5.4 further refines understandings of overall news strategies; where the frequency of stories is markedly higher than the time spent on them (for example, as with *Sport* across years and channels), then stories are generally short. In contrast, where frequencies are notably less than the time spent (as with *Foreign Affairs*), then stories are generally more substantive.

Among major individual shifts, BBC1 increased the time devoted to *War/Conflict/Terror* in 2014, while its coverage of *Crime* and *Foreign Affairs* decreased. Similarly, ITV1 increased the time devoted to *War/Conflict/Terror*, and also *Health/Disease/Research*. It also shows a decrease in the number of stories about crime, and the time spent reporting it. This may be partly explained by official statistics showing that crime was approximately 25% lower in 2014 than in 2007/8

<sup>4</sup> Rounding up and rounding down in order to present to one decimal place means that the sums of some columns are not exactly 100%. This applies to all subsequent tables in this study.

(Office for National Statistics 2014). Turning to EBF news, Figure 5.4 isolates the EBF data from the previous table and presents it in graphical form.

**Figure 5.3 EBF issues across news and channels.**

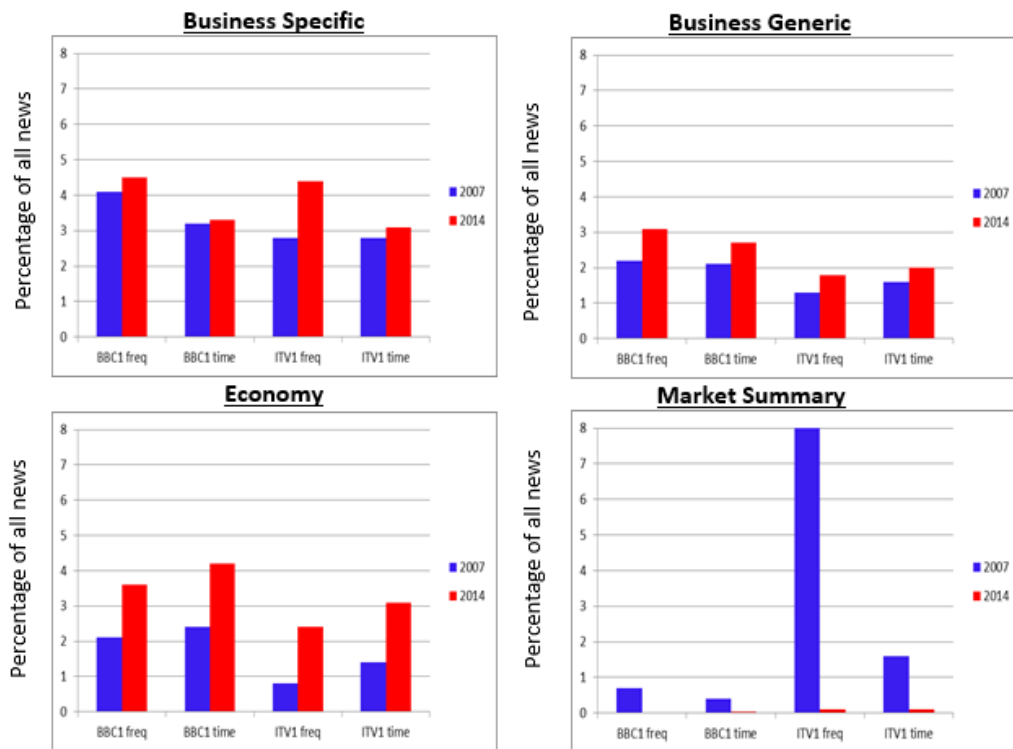


Figure 5.3 demonstrates that with the exception of market summary reporting, coverage of EBF issues increased across channels and years, both in terms of the number of stories and the time spent on them. This is even despite economic stories being unpopular with programme editors (Harrison 2000); the compelling and extraordinary nature of the financial crisis therefore, might have overridden such preferences.

The public service function required of U.K news broadcasters means that more attention is generally paid to serious news, contrasting, for example, with the U.S, where broadcasting deregulation means that topics such as politics, social affairs and business are marginalised by strong commercial imperatives (McChesney 2008; Patterson 2000). Invoking correlations between news coverage and world events, the increase in EBF news is consistent with audiences having an increasing appetite for such coverage, despite finding it difficult to understand (BBC 2012). Michael Jerney reflected on this increase and that “post the crash... there was an awful lot more

attention on domestic economics and so forth, so I suspect it reflects a bit of a public mood...”.

The global financial crisis has intensified this demand for EBF news as scrutiny of economic affairs increased (Anderson 2004; Kjær and Slaatta 2007), further amplified since the media did not anticipate past financial scandals and crises (Doyle 2007; Tambini 2010; Butterick 2015), and might be trying to avoid making the same mistakes again. The increasing interest in EBF news continues the general trend driven by the establishing of specialist global platforms such as Bloomberg and CNBC (Lewis 2013a).

Besides public service approaches and heightened interest, the most plausible increase in EBF reporting is explained through the prism of news values, suggesting that editorial decision-making is driven by elements such as negativity, conflict and others resonant with public sensibilities. The long-established discourse of “excess” within the topic of remuneration (Brown 1992; Lissy and Morgenstern 1994) for example, is now set alongside widespread cutbacks in the name of “austerity” (Dittmann et al. 2011). Furthermore, the financial crisis means that millions of ordinary citizens for example, are troubled by, and will be interested in, increasing inflation, stagnant wages, debt, uncertain pensions and so on.

Post-crisis therefore, EBF news has larger, more populist audiences, especially since financial events follow the U.K parliamentary expenses scandal of 2009 and its accompanying narratives regarding moat cleaning, swimming pools and helipads (Winnett 2009). Such stories are highly newsworthy, and economic stories become more compelling for editors - and audiences - when they focus on people rather than data (Harrison 2000). Economic news derives news values from “longer-term expectations” of recovery, fragility and so on (Richardson 1998, p.225), and these themes are likely to interest wide audiences since they impact millions of people.

The shift away from data-based stories means that EBF reporting has become less specialist. Though one might expect market and currency news on BBC1 rather than ITV1 (Brighton 2007), Figure 5.4 shows the market summary to be almost exclusively an ITV1 convention. Its abandonment, between 2007 and 2014, further indicates that ITV1 adjusted its EBF reporting to appeal to wider audiences. EBF reporting has been

subject to accusations that it attends to wealth, and the interests of narrowly-defined business communities (see, inter alia, McChesney 2003; Tambini 2010; Lewis 2013a; Lewis and Thomas 2015), reflecting “the triumph of business over industry” (Winston 1994, p.19). This deference to corporate interests was thought to manifest itself in the reporting of markets and currencies (Devereux 1998), who is “up and down” (Lewis 2013a), and stories not reflecting the interests of the wider population.

#### **5.4 General news categories: dominant categories and major movers.**

Table 5.5 shows category data by year and prominence. Before categories are deemed more prominent than others, some unifying measurement system is required. Rather than attending to story frequency *and* story time, categories are expressed as a percentage of total news time. Percentage category time shows the priority given to that news type, and is a regular research protocol (see, inter alia, Cushion and Thomas 2013: Cushion et al. 2014, Cushion et al. 2015).

**Table 5.5 Prominence of category types (with EBF categories highlighted in green).**

	2007			2014		
	T= % of overall news time OP= Overall position in that year					
	BBC1	ITV1		BBC1	ITV1	
Total time	300,483	222,400		371,535	372,424	
	T	T	OP	T	T	OP
War/Conflict/Terror	14.6	17.7	1	21.4	19.5	1
Crime*	11.2	14.1	2	9.9	9.3	2
Foreign Affairs	12.7	8.7	3	9.1	8.6	4
Sport	4.4	7.9	5	5.9	8.5	5
Political process/ policy/ obituaries	10.2	7.7	4	10.3	8.5	3
Home Affairs	5.0	3.1	6	3.5	3.0	10
Accident / Disaster/ Tragedy	3.1	3.1	8	3.3	4.0	=8
Business Specific	3.2	2.8	9	3.3	3.1	11
Weather / consequences of	3.3	3.6	7	2.6	2.8	12
Health / Disease / Research	2.9	1.3	=11	4.4	3.9	6
Royal Family	2.2	2.0	=11	0.8	1.3	=21
Generic Business	2.1	1.6	18	2.7	2.0	13
Animal related	2.2	2.7	10	0.3	0.5	=29
Economy	2.4	1.4	=16	4.2	3.1	=8
Media	1.9	2.3	=11	0.4	0.6	27
Defence	2.6	1.2	=16	0.3	0.6	28
Politics scandal / controversy	2.2	2.0	=11	2.1	2.4	14
NHS / Medical profession	1.3	0.8	24	1.3	1.5	17
Immigration / asylum	1.9	0.5	21	1.8	2.1	15
Transport	1.2	1.0	22	0.6	0.5	26
Education	1.3	0.4	28	1.2	0.9	=21
Science/Technology/ Space	1.3	0.6	27	0.9	0.8	24
Art/ High culture/History	1.0	0.2	29	1.1	1.1	=18
Environment	1.6	2.5	15	0.3	0.2	31
Celebrity	0.9	2.1	20	1.3	2.0	16
Popular entertainment	0.7	1.5	=22	0.7	1.5	=18
Human Interest	0.7	1.3	=25	0.4	0.9	25
Market summary / SE	0.4	1.6	=25	0.03	0.1	32
Civil unrest	0.5	0.6	30	1.1	1.1	=18
Religion / Religious affairs	0.4	0.3	31	0.3	0.5	=29
Scotland Independence	0.2	0.0	32	4.3	3.1	7
Newspaper reviews	0.01	3.6	19	0.0	2.0	23
Totals	≈100	≈100		≈100	≈100	

In Table 5.5, as well as showing percentages of overall news time for each story category, column *OP* indicates its ranking that year when both BBC1 and ITV1 volumes are combined. At this stage, EBF categories are not addressed since they are subject to detailed analysis later. By a notable margin, *War/Conflict/Terror* dominates the agendas of both channels in both years, increasing by a total of 8.6% of news time in 2014 compared to 2007. Other notable increases in prominence include:

*Scottish Independence* - up 7.2% (from 0.2% to 7.4%)

*Health/ Disease/Research* - up 4.1% (from 4.2% to 8.3%)

Notable overall decreases in prominence include:

*Crime* - down 6.1% (from 25.3% to 19.2%)

*Animal-related* - down 4.1% (from 4.9% to 0.8%)

*Environment* - down 3.6% (from 4.1% to 0.5%)

The increases might be explained by a number of year-specific events, such as the campaign for Scottish Independence, and the beginning of the Ebola crisis in Africa. The idea that news follows events (Harrison 2000; Barnett and Gaber 2001) is wholly plausible, but cannot explain why, in 2014, coverage of the *Environment* (including climate change and so on) had all but disappeared.

Table 5.6 shows that when measured by percentage time, the most prominent categories of *War/Conflict/Terror*, *Crime*, *Foreign Affairs* and *Sport* and *Politics* are reasonably consistently positioned across both years and both channels, once again contributing to the developing theme of convergence between BBC1 and ITV1 news.

**Table 5.6 The five most prominent categories measured by times and rank.**

	2007			2014		
	BBC1	ITV1		BBC1	ITV1	
	Position	Position	Overall Position	Position	Position	Overall Position
<i>War/Conflict/Terror</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Crime</i>	3	2	2	3	2	2
<i>Foreign Affairs</i>	2	3	3	4	3	4
<i>Sport</i>	6	4	5	5	=4	5
<i>Political process/ policy/ obituaries</i>	4	5	4	2	=4	3

The list and positioning of these top categories indicate that the same types of stories are common across channels and years, as both BBC1 and ITV1 feature the same types of news, and generally arrange them in the same order of prominence. This further supports the theme of convergence and homogeneity, and the stability of the categories also counters suggestions that news agendas are becoming more trivial (see also Barnett et al. 2012).

### 5.5 EBF news: an increased prominence.

Isolating EBF categories from Table 5.5, Table 5.7 shows magnitude of change in these categories, and their relative positions versus the other story types within aggregate news agendas.

**Table 5.7 Refined prominence of EBF news categories by channel and year.**

	T= % Time P= Relative Position OP= Overall Position in that year					T= % Time P= Relative Position OP= Overall Position in that year				
	2007					2014				
	BBC1		ITV1			BBC1		ITV1		
	T	P	T	P	OP	T	P	T	P	OP
Business Specific	3.2	8	2.8	10	9	3.3	=10	3.1	=8	11
Generic Business	2.1	16	1.6	17	18	2.7	12	2.0	=15	13
Economy	2.4	12	1.4	20	-16	4.2	8	3.1	=8	-8
Market summary / SE	0.4	=29	1.6	=17	-25	0.03	33	0.1	34	34
If all EBF categories were combined	8.1	5	7.4	6	5	10.2	3	8.3	6	4

Table 5.7 shows that with the exception of the *Market Summary* on both channels, and *Business Specific* on BBC1, all EBF categories have increased in terms of prominence within overall news agendas. If all EBF categories are combined, then EBF news increased its prominence from 5<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>. The total percentage of time spent on EBF issues by BBC1 in 2007 and 2014 is 8.1% and 10.2%; coincidentally, Svennevig (2007) also found a result of 10.2% across a wide range of news output. Figure 5.4 considers the sequence in which stories appear within a bulletin, minus the market summary category, which had all but disappeared by 2014.

**Figure 5.4 The prominence of EBF categories within bulletins.**

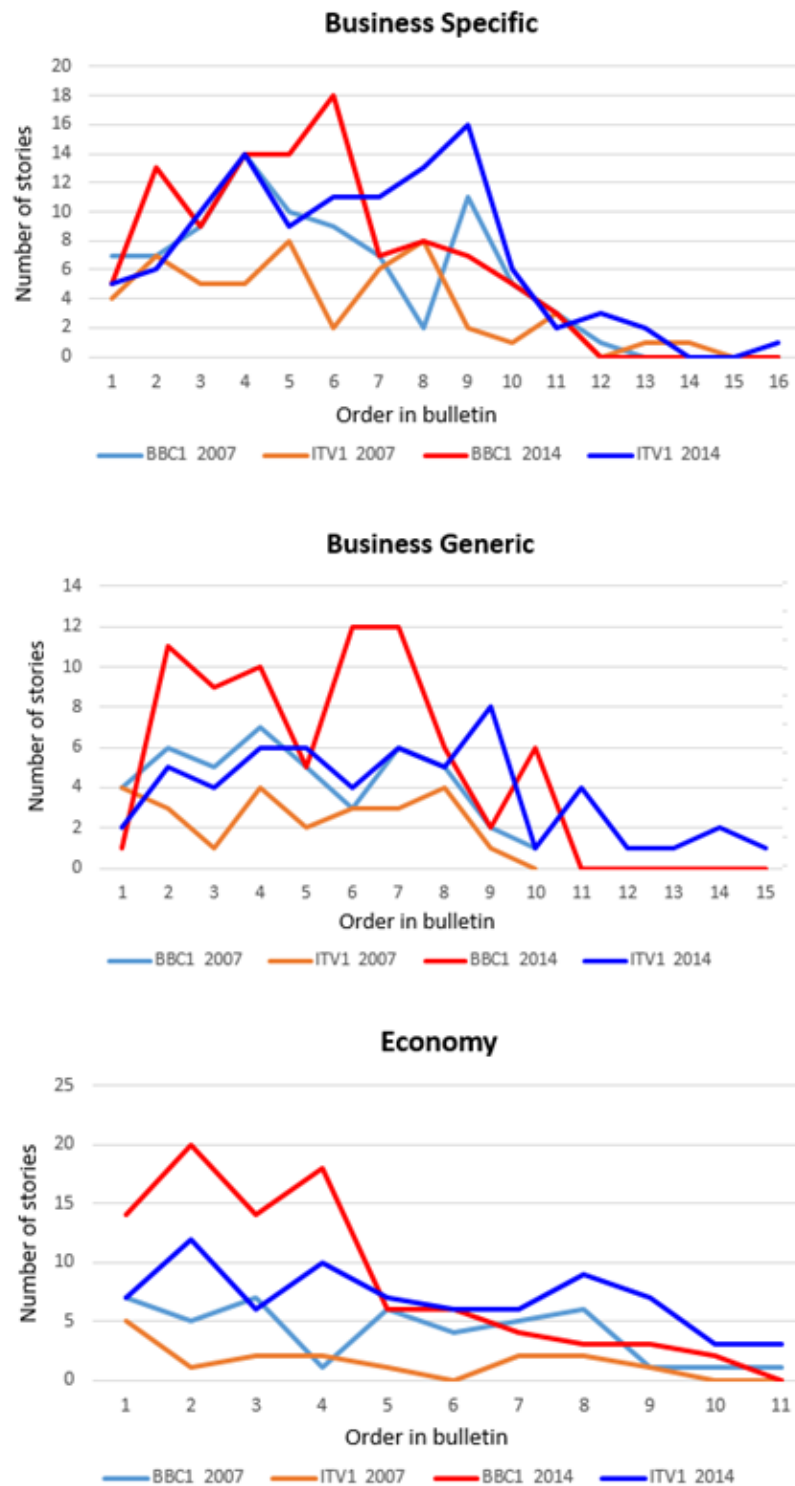
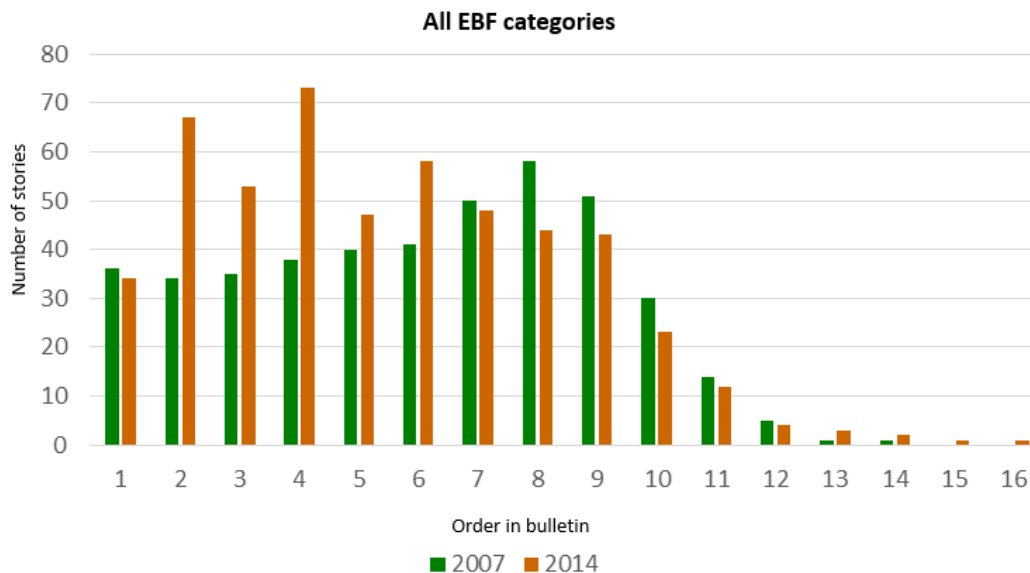


Figure 5.4 shows where EBF categories appear within bulletins, they are more prominent earlier in bulletin running orders in 2014 than they were in 2007. BBC1 (red lines) are higher than ITV1 (blue lines), showing that BBC1 features more EBF

stories. From the pattern and spread of the observations, it is evident that in general, ITV1 feature these issues no earlier or later than BBC1.

One complicating issue is that in 2007, ITV1 bulletins were often (but not always) interrupted by advertisement breaks. Important stories are often positioned immediately after the advertising break to re-engage viewers after the interruption, mitigating criticisms that, post-advertisements, bulletins are entirely occupied with less important and more trivial news (Harrison 2000, p.96). By merging data generated by both channels, the impact of ITV1's advertisement break is mitigated; Figure 5.5 demonstrates that if channels were merged, EBF news in general appears earlier in news bulletins in 2014 than it did in 2007.

**Figure 5.5 Overall EBF news expressed in terms of story order.**



Irrespective of which criteria might be used to select news (public service or news values/commercial logics), the most important stories might reasonably be expected to feature earlier in news bulletins (Harrison 2000). Findings so far, *Market Summary* aside, are that a larger proportion of BBC1's overall news agenda is devoted to EBF news than is the case for ITV1. The financial crisis bookended by 2007 and 2014 has not changed this, but the proportion of EBF news on both channels has increased in accordance with audiences taking a greater interest in such issues (Schifferes 2011), and consistent with notions that EBF news has become more obviously newsworthy. In sum, therefore, in addition to the post-crisis increase in EBF news and a change in



the apparent nature of EBF news reporting, these issues were also given greater story order prominence.

### **5.6 The shift in balance between hard and soft news.**

The analysis now moves to the dynamic nature of news content, enabling general conclusions about changing trends across channels and years. The conceptualisation of news as either “hard” or “soft” has long preoccupied journalism scholarship (see for example, Mott 1952). Broadly, this measures adherence to public service logics, especially relevant for UK broadcasting research. Put simply, harder news is more closely aligned to public service, while softer news resonates more closely with commercial logics where audience size is more important than how well that audience is being informed and democracy is being served. More specifically, ITV1 may be expected to include more celebrity-driven stories than BBC1 (Brighton 2007), while BBC1 might preference harder content (Cushion 2012) including economic issues (see Lewis et al. 2005).

Hard/soft measurements can test theories that news is moving towards infotainment (see Franklin 1997) where “lifestyle and consumer journalism are pre-eminent” (Thussu 2008, p.11). Moreover, this can also provide some sense of expectation as to the likely treatment of PIE issues. In sum, hard news concerns matters of importance, while soft news concerns matters of interest (Tuchman 1978). Further, hard news is considered as requiring “immediate publication” (Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky 2010, p.37-38), while soft news attends to less urgent matters not unduly affecting the audience.

The hard/soft news contrast is pertinent to this research. There is concern for example, whether engaged democratic citizens are served by soft news (Zaller 2003, p.110); such citizens may for example, be concerned about issues such as income inequality. In practice, soft news might consist of “catchy stories about crime, Hollywood and sports stars, the Royal Family, and quirky trivialities” (Barnett et al. 2000, p.13). However, *Crime*, as a sizeable news category requires some explanation.

Since it is often characterised by distressing events, *Crime* might be reasonably termed as hard or “serious” news. However, since it is often preoccupied with episodic events, and with perpetrators and victims rather than with wider societal

implications, it is more appropriately judged to be soft news (Curran et al. 2009). Furthermore, crime is considered soft since news providers often present it disproportionately. For example, violent crime dominates coverage, while in reality, it is far outweighed by crime concerning property or possessions (Moore 2014). Accordingly, it can be concluded that crime stories contain many of the news values identified in Chapter 2, but does not accurately inform citizens about the real world (Katz 1987), as instead it distorts reality by sharply and regularly focusing on unusual events. Consequently *Crime* is routinely categorised as soft (Bennett 2003; De Swert 2007), and research informing coding categories used for Level 1 Content Analysis in this research (for example, Barnett and Gaber 2000; Barnett et al. 2012) concur that crime is “tabloid”<sup>5</sup>.

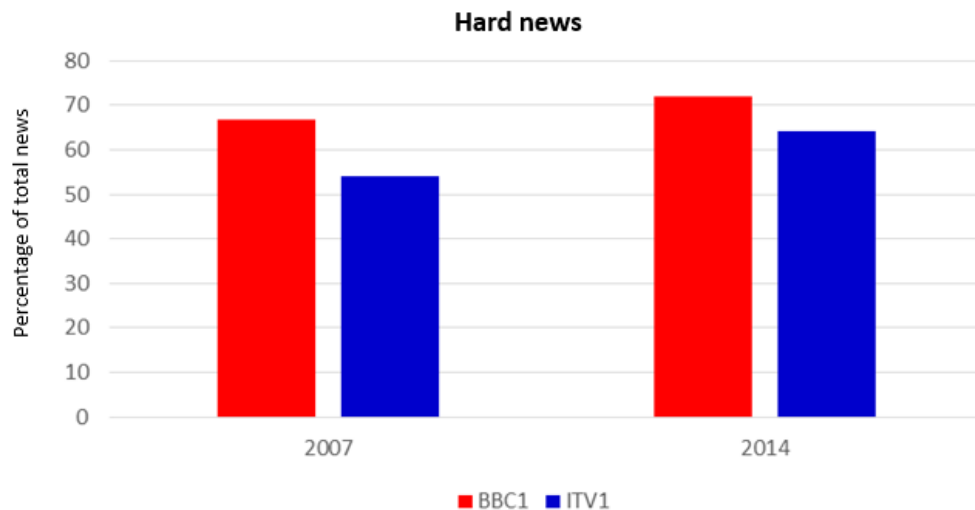
However, the hard/soft comparison can be problematic. Tuchman (1978, p.48, original emphasis) highlights “classificatory” difficulties, including determining whether stories are “interesting” or “important”, or “interesting *and* important”. Decision-making within analysis is both subjective and complex. For example, stories concerning *Expeditions/ Adventure* are said to be indicative of a “tabloid” agenda (Barnett et al. 2000; Barnett et al. 2012). Within this research sample however, on 12/11/14, BBC1 News anchor Huw Edwards described the Rosetta Space probe successfully landing on a comet as “one of the greatest achievements in the history of space exploration”. This hardly resonates with wider understandings of soft news.

Accordingly, and because of this inherent subjectivity and era-specific categorisation (such as *Scottish Independence*), definitions of hard and soft vary. Notwithstanding this caveat, the taxonomies informing Level 1 Content Analysis (Barnett et al. 2000; Barnett et al. 2012) provide a more specific blueprint for decision-making associated with what constitutes hard or soft news. Accordingly, Figure 5.6 shows the proportions of hard and soft news across channels and years.

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<sup>5</sup> Barnett and Gaber (2000) and Barnett et al (2012) use the nomenclature “tabloid” and “broadsheet” rather than “hard” and “soft”. Winston (2002) also contextualises soft news in terms of “tabloidization”.

**Figure 5.6 Hard news as a percentage of all news time across news and channels.**



Previous scholarship has found that since the late 1970s, BBC1’s “broadsheet” agenda has rarely dropped below 80% (Barnett et al. 2012; Barnett et al. 2000). Findings here cannot be easily mapped to such research since taxonomies of hard and soft news vary between studies. Notwithstanding such differences, a general move towards hard news is exemplar of what public service broadcasters provide for democratic welfare (Barnett et al. 2000). However, the major conclusion here is that ITV1 has made a greater move towards the harder news agenda of BBC1.

Further enhancing the emerging pattern of homogeneity between BBC1 and ITV1, Table 5.8 indicates which individual categories increased or decreased by at least 4 positions within the overall channel ratings in Table 5.5. Once again, this shows considerable common ground between the two channels, since both have generally increased or decreased the same types of news. In addition to finding that BBC1 and ITV1 adopt increasingly similar conventions therefore, their dynamic changes in coverage are also similar.

**Table 5.8 Notable movements by category and channel between 2007 and 2014.**

	Coverage <b>INCREASE</b>		Coverage <b>DECREASE</b>	
	BBC1 increased	ITV1 increased	BBC1 decreased	ITV1 decreased
Health / Disease / Research	YES	YES		
Art/ High culture/History	YES	YES		
Civil Unrest	YES	YES		
EBF News (all categories)	YES	YES		
Scottish Independence	YES	YES		
NHS / Medical profession	YES	YES		
Weather / Consequences			YES	YES
Royal Family			YES	YES
Animal Related			YES	YES
Media			YES	YES
Environment			YES	YES
Celebrity	YES			
Immigration / asylum		YES		
Education		YES		
Religion/Religious affairs			YES	
Defence			YES	
Newspaper review				YES
Transport				YES

**5.7 Reflections about news agendas.**

ITV1's shift to the provision of more serious news might be further supported by the sheer amount of news they supply. Using data referring to average story numbers and mean story times, it can be concluded from Table 5.9 that bulletin lengths have changed across years.

**Table 5.9 Changing nature of ITV1 bulletin lengths from 2007 to 2014.**

Channel	Year	Mean time per story (secs)	Average number of stories per bulletin	Extrapolated average bulletin length (secs)
BBC1	2007	146.3	9.7	1419.1
	2014	157.6	9.6	1513.0
ITV1	2007	118.2	11.0	1300.2
	2014	122.6	12.5	1532.5

The extrapolated average lengths shown in Table 5.9 are the predicted news bulletin totals, and are calculated by multiplying average story length by the average number of stories per bulletin. As another indicator of channel convergence, both bulletins have increased their mean time per story, and a consequence, both channels appear to have increased their news time per bulletin. BBC1's increase in total news length appears marginal at around a minute and a half, but ITV1 seemingly provides almost

four minutes more news per bulletin in 2014 than it did in 2007, indicating that it has increased the time it actually devotes to news.

In February 2014, the advertisement break featuring within earlier descriptions of ITV1's *News at Ten* (Harrison 2000) reappeared. The change in ITV1's news delivery - "more news" and "more time" - might be explained by either a decrease in the non-news items "disaggregated" from analysis, a longer overall time-slot, or a combination of both. This particular chapter does not attend to ITV1's use of mid-bulletin advertising, apart from noting that although research acknowledges such advertising, it is not widely discussed, despite these commercials containing production values "at least as high as the programming they interrupt" (Lewis et al. 2005, p.463). However, Chapter 6 considers the positioning and content of, and the corporations represented by, ITV1's advertisements, supporting assertions that sponsor's messages are not "ideologically innocent" (Lewis et al. 2005, p.463).

Editors can take pragmatic approaches when choosing stories (Blumler and Gurevitch 1987), since certain story types are essential for a functioning democracy (Semetko et al. 1991). This is consistent with the normative theories of journalism (see, inter alia, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007), which embrace a wide range of hard news categories. More specific to broadcast news, Gans (2004) describes an American TV news culture embracing ethnocentric interests in local affairs, democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order and national leadership. While such issues - or British versions thereof - may be prime considerations for public service broadcasters such as BBC1, pragmatic evaluations of stories in terms of their appeal to news consumers (Blumler and Gurevitch 1987) may seem more pertinent for ITV1's commercial objectives.

Therefore, ITV1's move towards a harder news agenda is an interesting finding. Previously, Bell (2002) is among those suggesting that ITV's editorial decision-making was commercially driven, manifesting itself in a softer news output; there were also theories that market-led news logics prevailed more widely (Harrison 2000). Instead, the data presented here also suggests that like BBC1, ITV1's news agendas are changing from a previously reported shift to softer news (for a wider review, see Cushion 2014).

By way of explanation, Michael Jerney's comments are illuminating. He claims that ITV's strategy is "to invest in journalism" and "to offer a high quality and highly credible set of programmes". He cites an expansion into "investigative journalism" and "political discussion" for example, which, "for the first 7 or 8 years of the decade – weren't really there on ITV". This is especially noteworthy, given the general perception is that investigative journalism more widely is decreasing. ITV's broad strategy, proposes Jerney, is due to viewers wanting "highly credible journalism around foreign and domestic current affairs". Further, he suggests, ITV have "invested in specialist journalism", citing the engaging of Social Affairs Editor Penny Marshall, Political Editor Tom Bradby, and Business and Economic Editors Richard Edgar, Laura Kuenssberg and Joel Hills. All feature in the qualitative elements of this research (Chapter 6 and beyond). "At every turn" concludes Jerney, ITV "are looking invest in high quality journalism". Findings here suggest that in terms of the quantitative measures of content, this strategy has likely contributed to a hardening of the channel's news agenda.

### **5.8 EBF news: part of the shift towards harder news?**

To examine how EBF news fits into the identified trend of increasing hard news, these categories are now isolated for closer analysis. Since it has been largely abandoned since 2007, the *Market Summary* is withdrawn from this part of the analysis, and Table 5.10 breaks EBF news into its three constituent elements.

**Table 5.10 Changes in EBF categories across channels and years.**

Category	Change in BBC1 %age	Change in ITV 1 %age	Channel with most coverage by time in 2007	Channel with most coverage by time in 2014	Total movement in %age
<b>Economy</b>	+1.8	+1.7	BBC1	BBC1	+3.5
<b>Generic Business</b>	+0.6	+0.4	BBC1	BBC1	+1.0
<b>Business Specific</b>	+0.1	+0.3	BBC1	BBC1	+0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>+2.5</b>	<b>+2.4</b>	<b>BBC1</b>	<b>BBC1</b>	<b>+4.9</b>

Table 5.10 shows that all EBF categories have increased, consistent with the increase in hard news, with stories about the *Economy* increasing more than news about individual or collective businesses. Despite increases in ITV1 coverage of EBF issues, BBC1's pre-eminence is not seriously challenged, supporting the conclusion that the volume of business output of ITV is lower than that of BBC (Svennevig 2007). Further, ahead of deeper investigation into the content and framing of EBF stories, the

conclusion that the BBC “is a major player in the delivery of business information field, particularly for those for whom business matters are not a central part of everyday life” (Svennevig 2007, p.29) appears well-founded.

The empirical findings described in this chapter help to develop a picture of BBC1 and ITV1 news provision in terms of both format and content. This chapter details the widest possible blueprint of the news presented by a public service broadcaster and its more lightly regulated commercial rival, and how both channels go about delivering their news agendas. Previous research considering the comparison between commercial and public service broadcasters can be contextualised as following either a model of “constancy”, where channels remain distinctly different, or “convergence”, where there they become increasingly similar (Hellman and Sauri 1994).

Numerous studies (see for example, Moe and Syvertsen 2009) find evidence of both, with public service broadcasters carrying serious content while also adopting schedules more akin to commercial channels. Other research detected a tangible and significant divergence between the BBC and ITV late evening bulletins (Barnett et al. 2000). Barnett et al’s (2012, p.2) mirror analysis concluded that “the clear differentiation between BBC and ITV which we noted in our first study has therefore been consolidated but has not widened”. This study does not extend beyond 10pm news bulletins, but in contrast with Barnett et al. (2000) and Barnett et al. (2012), it finds a degree of convergence demonstrated by increasing story lengths, the popularity and clustering of short stories, the delivery of more news, a general increase in the same hard news categories, and a more specific increase in EBF categories.

At this stage, conclusions can be made only on the basis of conventions, format and story type; the style and delivery of this content will be more insightful. For example, analysis of imagery and the role of institutional sources (Schaap 2009) offers a richness not provided by numerical data, and these elements are considered in Chapter 6. However, there can be at least provisional and tentative support for Barnett et al.’s (2000, p.13) summary that despite “dire warnings about the damaging effect of channel proliferation and market competition”, the nation’s broadcasters have continued to maintain “remarkably robust and broadly serious

approach to television news". Moreover, "viewers on the mass audience channels still have access to serious coverage of important domestic and foreign issues alongside a reasonable proportion of lighter, more tabloid issues" (Barnett et al. 2000, p.13). The pessimistic outlook that in the current decade, TV news might not have continued its "balanced and diversified approach" (Barnett et al. 2000, p.13) now seems unfounded given the shift in hard news from 2007 to 2014 across both channels.

While this chapter details a quantitative model of broad news agendas, the next chapter combines a more closely detailed examination of EBF news, with qualitative examples adding some nuance to the emerging themes. It indicates that while conventions and content may be increasingly similar, the tone and style of the two channels vary; while this chapter shows ITV1 to be less prominent in almost all aspects of EBF news, the next chapter shows ITV1 to be more combative than BBC1 in ways it reports EBF news. Both channels however, share the same, generally unchallenging approach to the prevailing system of free-market capitalism.

#### **5.9 Key findings from Chapter 5.**

- **Notwithstanding some anomalies, BBC1 and ITV1 are increasingly homogenous in terms of bulletin format.**
- **Both channels have moved to a harder new agenda between 2007 and 2014.**
- **EBF news has increased on both channels between 2007 and 2014.**
- **EBF news conventions relying solely on numerical data have been dropped.**
- **EBF news is more prominent on both channels, and if EBF sub-categories are combined and channels merged, it has moved from 5<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> most covered story type.**
- **Both channels feature EBF news earlier within bulletins in 2014 than in 2007.**



## **Chapter 6. EBF reporting on BBC1 and ITV1 - Probing or Perfunctory?**

Chapter 5 described the increasing homogeneity between BBC1 and ITV1 in terms of content, format and conventions, and the increase in harder news. There was also an increase in the volume of EBF news, and this chapter examines EBF reporting in more detail, supplementing quantitative findings with qualitative detail.

To examine quantitatively identified themes and trends within EBF reporting, this chapter uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multimodal Analysis (MA) to demonstrate the ideological impact of EBF news reporting, and develops explanations using appropriate examples<sup>1</sup>. These examples were selected on the basis that they contained pertinent instances of the key themes and trends identified by Level 1 Content Analysis. The chapter begins by establishing that EBF news can have considerable impact, then develops analysis to reveal that economic growth is framed as a positive and universal solution to a range of fiscal difficulties. Using energy suppliers as a case study, the analysis shows how, through the theme of conflict, contemporary reports about EBF issues contain news values that editors might find attractive when deciding which news is shown, and which is not. The analysis then more sharply focuses on the banking sector, which dominates EBF news agendas in both years and on both channels.

Coverage is shown to be simplistic and light as hard news is often presented in soft ways, and BBC1's approach is found to be more deferential to that taken by ITV1, who are more combative in their commentary and interviewing. Through a case study focusing on Barclays PLC, ITV1 are further shown to take an unexpectedly assertive approach to the reporting of corporations who also fund their programmes. The chapter concludes that despite a partial redefining of EBF reporting, the ethos of free market economics and neoliberalism prevails. This major theme of neoliberal reliance is carried over to the more specific analysis of PIE issues in Chapters 7 and 8, and represents a major part of the explanatory discussion in Chapter 9.

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<sup>1</sup> News reports are presented as transcribed data alongside corresponding screenshots (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

### **6.1 The impact of EBF reporting: Northern Rock and the “run of the bank”.**

The idea that journalists often promote economic ideology (Parsons 1989) is an important precursor to this empirical research. EBF news has impact (see, inter alia, Winston 1994; Engelberg and Parsons 2011; Hollanders and Vliegenthart 2011; Schifferes 2011). For example, depending on the way EBF and PIE issues are presented, citizens, businesspeople, politicians and policymakers may agitate for change, or may more passively allow dominant discourses and ideology to go unchallenged. This analysis demonstrates the impact of EBF news through the prism of one news story in 2007: the “run on the bank” at Northern Rock. These events are considered the first local manifestations of the financial crisis, acknowledged to have begun as U.S subprime lending problems gained traction (see, inter alia, Linsley and Slack 2013; Wisniewski and Lambe 2013; Picard 2015), and spread quickly to the U.K because of the “close economic relations” between the two nations (Muradoglu 2010, p.6).

On 13/9/07, both BBC1 and ITV1 reported that Northern Rock had asked the Bank of England, in its role as “lender of last resort” (Gillespie and Cornish 2013, p.88), to bolster their resources. The institution had lent to its customers on the basis that it could borrow from the global money markets, but there were problems when these markets refused to do so (Martin 2013; Brummer 2014). The Bank of England’s intervention was to mitigate panic before other organisations were affected (Schifferes 2011). Despite funding arrangements not being finalised until early on Friday 14/9/07, the story was reported on the preceding evening (Milne and Wood 2009; Shin 2009; Linsley and Slack 2013). Figure 6.1 shows how BBC1 covered the events as its lead story. Anchor Huw Edwards provides the introduction:

**Figure 6.1 BBC1 report the first signs of the Northern Rock crisis on 13/9/07.**



Business Editor Robert Peston then gives some general background, and explains that Northern Rock had asked for assistance because of the impact of U.S lending

practices. Peston discusses the decision by then Bank of England Governor - Mervyn King - to acquiesce to the request:



*(The decision) is good news for Northern Rock depositors and savers. As Mervyn King made clear this week, the Bank will only act as lender of last resort when it sees a bank's problems as being exceptional, and it hopes, short-lived.*

The report concludes with a live two-way exchange between Edwards and Peston. Peston responds to Edwards' question about why the Bank of England intervened:



*...the mere fact that uh, the Bank of England has stepped in will actually worry people tomorrow - I expect we will see shares coming off a bit - Northern Rock's own shares have fallen something like 50% this year - they fell a bit again uh today... um now, to be absolutely clear there is no suggestion that this business is fundamentally bust but merely running out of money in this way for a bank is extraordinarily serious...*



HE - So for all the people watching that have savings in Northern Rock, what's the message tonight?  
RP - Now, I think the really important point here is really, what Mervyn King the Bank Governor said earlier this week in a letter to the Treasury Select Committee. What he said was that the bank would only provide finance of this sort under its emergency lending procedures when it believed that the problems being experienced by the recipient bank were exceptional and no likely to last too long. If he thought that an institution was in serious difficulties, they wouldn't actually provide this kind of money - so - having spoken to senior officials I can tell you that they're saying that there's no reason for depositors to panic...  
HE - Robert, thank you very much.

Though ongoing organisational legitimacy is problematic (Elsbach and Sutton 1992) - especially during dramatic events - credibility is nevertheless important (Main et al. 1995; Hardy and Phillips 1998; Kostova and Zaheer 1999). In his introduction, Huw Edwards establishes such plausibility by explaining that "Northern Rock is solvent", and that "customers are being told not to worry". Robert Peston offers further reassurance that "there is no suggestion that this business is fundamentally bust". Tellingly, additional comfort is generated when Edwards invites Peston to send a "message" to savers. For a second time, Peston quotes Mervyn King, who explained that support would only be given in exceptional and short-term circumstances, and that it would have not been forthcoming if the institution was in "serious difficulties". Peston's coda that "there is no reason for depositors to panic" (see also Gillsepie and Cornish 2013, p.88) is a final expression of succour. Figure 6.2 shows ITV1's parallel

report, comprising of a live exchange between anchor James Mates and Business Correspondent Mark Eddo:

**Figure 6.2** ITV1 report the first signs of the Northern Rock crisis on 13/9/07.



*It is becoming clear tonight that the Northern Rock bank has applied for - and got - emergency financial support from the Bank of England. Northern Rock is believed to have had difficulties raising cash from commercial markets because of the international certainty created by massive quantities of bad debt in the United States mortgage lending business. Well, our Business Correspondent Mark Eddo is with me in the studio - How serious could this be for Northern Rock?*



*ME - Well it looks very serious. This is the probably the most dramatic and unusual development in the whole subprime mortgage problem that we've seen float in from the United States - we saw quite a big shake up in the markets in the summer and this is one of the most dramatic movements... Uh, Northern Rock going to Threadneedle Street uh, with cap in hand asking to be bailed out. Now Northern Rock is probably more exposed to the subprime problems than most because it relies on the money markets day to day - it has no reserves, it has no retail clients to go to like the bigger banks uh, to get money, so it relies day-to-day on the credit markets, and the credit markets just aren't giving money, and if they are, they are giving them at very high rates, so Northern Rock needs the Bank of England's help.*



*JM - And briefly could we see other banks or building societies having to do the same thing?*

*ME - Quite easily - this is a model that well, last year we were patting the likes of Northern Rock on the head for, you know, this, this tight model where you just take money with one hand and give to lenders with the other and there are number of smaller lenders that also fit that mould - they have that sort of model and they too will be exposed, they too will be exposed as much as Northern Rock - it's - uh - we're yet to see whether they will be going to the Bank of England whether the Bank of England is going to help them too...*



*JM - Very worrying. Mark - thank you for that explanation.*

After his introduction, James Mates asks a question full of presuppositions. Presuppositions can be manipulative (Huckin 2002), assisting what appear to be “logical” arguments (Machin and Mayr 2013, p.154). In this case, it is taken for granted that Northern Rock has problems, and only the extent of these problems is in question. In response, Mark Eddo describes events as “very serious” and accentuates the dangers facing Northern Rock, suggesting they are “probably more exposed” to risk. After Eddo predicts other such incidents, Mates’ final judgement that the situation is “very worrying” arguably leaves viewers more concerned than reassured.



In terms of tone and content, ITV1 are markedly more doom-laden and implicitly critical of Northern Rock than BBC1. Sometime later, Peston reviewed his broadcast comments that evening, denying that he had been “excitable” (Hulbert 2015, p.289), and asserting that his warning against panic was repeated in his BBC website postings (Butterick 2015; Schifferes and Knowles 2015). Irrespective of BBC1’s caution and ITV1’s dismay, witnesses to the Treasury Select Committee and senior officials at Northern Rock claimed that media disclosure caused public concern (Milne and Wood 2009; Linsley and Slack 2013), and that Peston in particular - in his influential role on the most watched UK TV news programme - was a major catalyst in the events that followed (Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2013; Hulbert 2015).

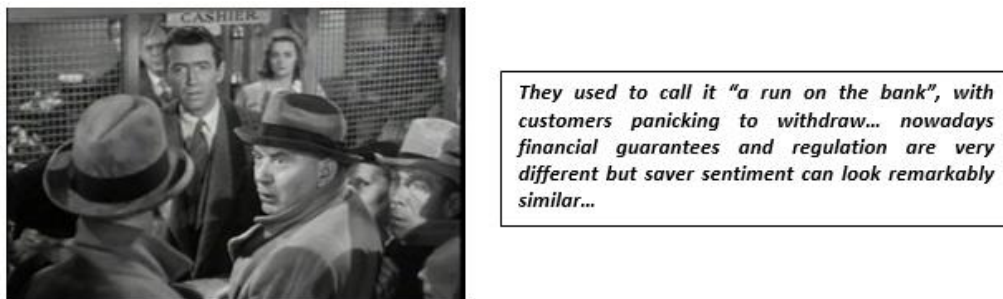
The following day, thousands of investors attempted to withdraw money from Northern Rock (Mayes and Wood 2008; Shin 2009), representing the first “run on a bank” since Victorian times (Milne and Wood 2009, p.89). A “run on the bank” occurs when depositors require banks to convert “debt claims into cash” (Calomiris and Gorton 1991, p.112), and the ensuing economic panic results in the bank’s collapse (Stabile 2001). Previously, banks could be supported more surreptitiously, and images would not be shown by a deferential media system (Milne and Wood 2009). Events at Northern Rock made it clear that this was no longer the case (Muradoglu 2010), and indicate a possible shift in the approach to EBF news, where media are less sympathetic regarding corporate affairs. Figure 6.3 shows a range of powerful images featured within the reports, all with the potential to affect “public confidence in the banking system” (Schifferes and Knowles 2015, p.44).

**Figure 6.3 BBC1 and ITV1 images associated with the “run” on Northern Rock.**



Further sensationalising the story, ITV1's report on 14/9/07 concludes with scenes from the famous film *It's a Wonderful Life* (See Figure 6.4). Events at Northern Rock were dissimilar to those in *It's a Wonderful Life* because it was "...the aftermath of the liquidity crisis at Northern Rock, rather than the event that triggered its liquidity crisis" (Shin 2009, p.102). Notwithstanding such finite analysis, these famous, fictional scenes have become indexical of "the run on the bank" (Don et al. 2003; Grant 2008; Balkenborg et al. 2011), and here, might also be indicative of issues being simplified for popular consumption.

**Figure 6.4** ITV1's report about "the run on the bank" on 14/9/07.



The key question is: where did those who queued to withdraw their money from Northern Rock receive the information influencing them to do so? Aside from any audience research, the news reports about Northern Rock and what followed are strongly indicative that these TV bulletins played some part in what happened, and even perhaps, the country's eventual fall into recession (Shifferes 2015). The concern felt by real people, and its mapping to a famous example from popular culture is also indicative that EBF news is increasingly driven by human emotions and experiences. These are more attractive to news editors than statistically-driven reports requiring pre-knowledge or expertise. The impact of EBF news therefore is undeniable; EBF journalists can instigate actions and events, and also shape opinions and attitudes.

## **6.2 Reporting the economy.**

Having demonstrated the influence of EBF reporting, this analysis now examines general economic issues, before more narrowly considering organisations and those working for them. Table 6.1 shows the key themes within *Economy* stories across channels and years<sup>2</sup>, arranged in approximate order of prominence. Whereas in Chapter 5, news categories were analysed by time (T), here analysing time is more

<sup>2</sup> Full coding explanations are found in Appendix 2.

problematic, since EBF stories are often difficult to confine to a single category. For example, TV news coverage about budgets straddle many economic issues. The budget report on BBC1 on 21/3/07 is exemplar; many aspects of the economic landscape are featured during a story lasting over 13 minutes. This clearly presents coding challenges since single speech acts often contain different themes; assigning these, for example, as either *Economy*, *Business Specific* or *Business Generic* was difficult to execute with consistency and rigour. Consequently, and as recommended by (Barnett et al. 2000), to simplify analysis, stories are not “double coded”, and only the most dominant theme within each story is selected. Data is expressed as a proportion of total stories rather than a proportion of total time. Table 6.1 shows the range of issues addressed within EBF coverage across both channels and both years.

**Table 6.1 Economy stories across channels and years (by percentage).**

Category	BBC1		ITV1	
	2007	2014	2007	2014
n = number of stories	43	85	15	74
Percentage of stories about each issue				
Interest rates / mortgages	39.5	10.6	53.3	23.0
House prices / housing market	18.6	9.4	13.3	8.1
Inflation	7.0	10.6	13.3	13.5
General financial situation	7.0	7.1	6.7	13.5
Budget	7.0	1.2	6.7	1.4
Deficit / national debt	2.3	10.6		5.4
Government borrowing	4.7	3.5		4.1
Growth/ GDP		14.1		6.8
Levels of employment / jobs created		9.4		6.8
Austerity		5.9		6.8
Minimum wage		3.5		1.4
Pay		3.5		2.7
Pensions		2.4		1.4
Energy	4.7			
Property development	4.7			
Cost of living	2.3			
Currency	2.3			
National assets			6.7	
Eurozone		3.5		
Banks/ Lenders		1.2		
Taxation		1.2		
Productivity		1.2		
Market or area dominance		1.2		
Investing in business				1.4
Ireland				1.4
Transport				1.4
Home improvements / construction				1.4
Totals	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100

Across years and channels, stories about the wider economy narrowly concentrate on interest rates and mortgages. In keeping with the increase in EBF news, both channels increased the number of economic stories in 2014 (double on BBC1; almost five times more on ITV1), and the range of sub-topics also increased (from 11 to 18 on BBC1; 6 to 17 on ITV1). Although interest rates and associated issues are less dominant, ITV1 maintain emphasis on these areas and embrace new elements such as *debt*, *borrowing*, *jobs*, *growth* and *austerity*. The broader range of sub-topics further emphasises that the focus of economic news has become less data-driven.

One issue absent in 2007 but appearing on both channels in 2014 (particularly on BBC1) is economic growth. In 2014, the U.K was still recovering from the financial crisis (Giles and Cadman 2015), so the focus on growth is unsurprising. The relationship between growth and income inequality is important because of claims that “economic growth, not redistribution, is the single most powerful mechanism for generating long-term increases in income per capita” (Snowdon 2006, p.75). Closer analysis of growth stories therefore, gives some indication as to how PIE issues might also be covered. Moreover, analysing growth offers some insight into the general ideological emphasis of EBF news. That growth was not dominant within *any* economic stories in 2007 seemingly indicates a pre-crisis landscape where a growing economy was taken for granted. The crisis, therefore, might have “amplified the clamour for growth” (Lewis and Thomas 2015, p.84). Accordingly, Table 6.2 shows the key themes and descriptions associated with growth in 2014.



**Table 6.2 The descriptions of growth on BBC1 and ITV in 2014.**

		Journalistic descriptions of growth
21/1	BBC1	"economy formerly ...flat as a pancake" "recovery is accelerated" "kind of growth we enjoyed in the boom years" "gratifying... that we are growing again"
21/1	ITV1	"Britain among the fastest growing world economies"
28/1	BBC1	"strongest showing since the financial crisis" "growing faster than at any time since 2007" "the long stagnation is over"
19/3	BBC1	"robust / strong economic growth"
8/4	BBC1	"UK could become the fastest growing world economy" "Britain to top the premier league for growth"
29/4	BBC1	"the British economy is revving up" "the economy is motoring along" "UK predicted to be the fastest growing advanced economy this year"
29/4	ITV1	"economy has almost come full circle"
9/5	BBC1	"almost returned to levels not seen before its peak just before the recession in 2008" "economy on the move" "making up all the ground lost during the recession"
24/7	ITV1	UK "now expected to outperform every other country in the developed world this year" "the course is set fair"
24/7	BBC1	"UK growing faster than any other developed economy" "recovered to pre-recession levels"
14/8	BBC1	"Eurozone economy ground to a halt" "the recovery has stalled" "zero growth... is regarded as really disappointing"
24/10	BBC1	"expansion was slower than the previous period" "poor growth in the Eurozone" "economy motoring forward at a fair old clip"
24/10	ITV1	"Britain leads the pack" "UK is outpacing other developed economies" "Germany has started shrinking... France has stagnated"
17/11	ITV1	"world economy struggling to recover"
17/11	BBC1	"stalling growth in the Eurozone" "just when you think the economy is motoring again" "there has been plenty of good economic news – growth is up" "a slowdown in the Eurozone"
17/11	BBC1	"third largest economy said its GDP had shrunk..." "Eurozone... stopped shrinking... but it can't pick up speed"
24/11	BBC1	"a danger... that we are entering a prolonged period of low growth" (question)

Financial events are often described using the rhetorical device of metaphor (Bickes et al. 2014; Hooker 2014), and Table 6.2 illustrates how growth is regularly articulated in terms of its dynamic characteristics. The concept of economies "motoring forward" is strongly evident, while low or no growth is pejorative, and instigates alarm and disappointment. Such findings are fully consistent with a study of growth in U.S and U.K broadsheet newspapers (Lewis and Thomas 2015), where it was found to be overwhelmingly positive, supporting suggestions that EBF news often lionizes wealth creation without offering ideological alternatives, and without addressing concerns about the environment or sustainability.

### **6.3 Reporting business.**

The increase in *Economic* news only accounts for some of the overall increase in EBF news. Other stories concern industry sectors or groups of organisations, with

“business” often referred to generically. For example, on 4/1/07, BBC1 reported a growing U.K trend of unpaid overtime, and on 9/10/07, that business leaders were unimpressed about increases in capital gains tax. Similarly, on 26/4/07, ITV1 described an investigation into hidden banking costs, and on 9/5/14, they discussed how estate agents were “double charging”. In Table 6.3, the two *Business* categories (*Specific* and *Generic*) were merged to show which industry sectors were covered.

**Table 6.3 Sectors in general and specific business reporting (by percentage).**

Category	BBC1		ITV1	
	2007	2014	2007	2014
<b>n = number of stories</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Banks / Lenders</b>	23.8	29.6	17.9	25.0
<b>Energy</b>	3.8	20.7	3.8	15.6
<b>Technology/Media/Communications</b>	11.5	7.3	14.1	8.8
<b>Supermarkets</b>	6.9	7.3	7.6	8.1
<b>Transport</b>	8.5	2.2	12.8	2.5
<b>Unspecified</b>	7.7	6.1	5.1	7.0
<b>Postal</b>	10.8	1.1	6.4	3.1
<b>Pharmaceuticals</b>	2.3	5.6	3.8	5.0
<b>Retail general</b>	1.5	5.6	1.3	6.9
<b>Insurance</b>	6.2	2.2	1.3	3.8
<b>Public sector</b>	3.1	3.9	2.6	2.5
<b>Food production</b>	3.1		5.1	3.1
<b>Motor manufacturers</b>	1.5	1.1	6.4	1.3
<b>Hospitality/Catering/Travel/Leisure</b>	1.5	0.6	1.3	3.1
<b>Others</b>	7.8	6.7	10.5	4.2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

In both years, EBF news agendas are dominated by the banking sector, resonant with the notion that banks are the “cause” and “location” of the crisis, and that financial sectors are pivotal within modern economies (see, inter alia, Butterick 2015; Murdock 2015). However, energy suppliers were also prominent in 2014, and Table 6.4 shows the specific issues covered in energy sector stories.

**Table 6.4 Subtopics when the focus is on energy (by percentage).**

Issue	BBC1		ITV1	
	2007	2014	2007	2014
<b>N</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Profitability / sales levels / prices</b>	20.0	29.7	66.6	24.0
<b>Unethical / illegal behaviour</b>	20.0	13.5		20.0
<b>Customer / supplier relations</b>	20.0	13.5		
<b>Total of 15 other identified issues</b>	40.0	43.3	33.4	56.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 6.4 reveals that around a quarter of stories on both channels in 2014 refer to the profitability and prices charged by energy suppliers, with unethical or illegal practices also evident. The energy sector is largely absent in 2007 but features five times more on BBC1 and eight times more on ITV1 in 2014. It can be concluded that despite being an essential household expense, energy is not a habitual newsmaker, but that the extraordinary activities of energy suppliers in 2014 attracted editorial attention.

#### **6.4 The business of conflict: energy suppliers versus consumers.**

The major energy story of 2014 was industry regular OFGEM referring the “big six” energy suppliers to the Competition and Markets Authority over their pricing policies. The themes of pricing and suggestions of malpractice combine within this story, which appeared on both channels on 27/3/14. Figure 6.5 shows some of the elements within the BBC1 report, beginning with an edited package from Industry and Employment Correspondent, John Moylan:

**Figure 6.5 BBC1’s report covering the OFGEM referral on 27/3/14.**



The story concludes with a live contribution from BBC1’s Political Editor, Nick Robinson.



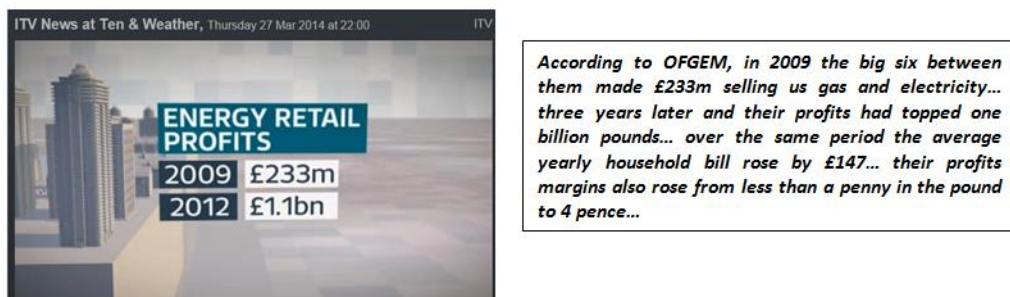
BBC1 are implicitly critical of the “big six”, quoting OFGEM’s evocative description of “soaring” prices and the “tacit co-ordination” between these suppliers regarding pricing. Consequently, Moylan explains, public confidence has suffered. Nick Robinson’s explanation concerns political ramifications, how the Labour Party might

use the issue to gain political traction, and how public anger might have instigated the wide-ranging enquiry. Robinson’s use of “fury” is a strong lexical selection; such emotive terms are central in terms of representation (Conboy 2007; Richardson 2007; Machin and Mayr 2012) and shape audience opinion. Figure 6.6 describes how ITV1 reported the story, as introduced by anchor Mark Austin:

**Figure 6.6** ITV1’s report covering the OFGEM referral on 27/3/14.

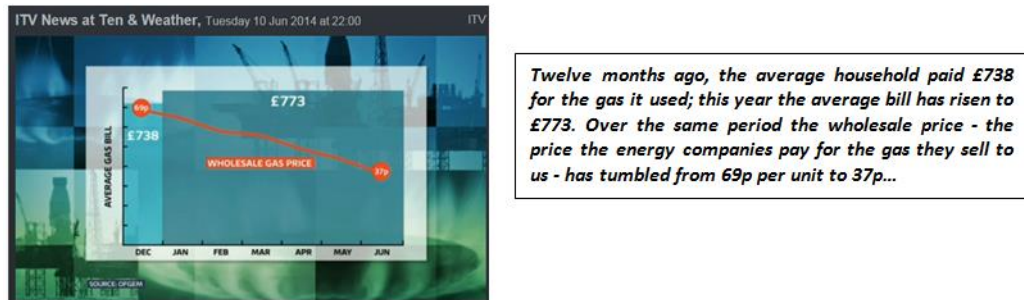


The story also included an edited package by ITV1’s Business Editor, Joel Hills.



This report resembles BBC1’s report, with references to increasing prices and “tacit co-ordination”. There are also some differences between the reports. For example, while BBC1 take a more political angle, ITV1 juxtapose increasing profitability with the plight of householders; profits have increased while domestic energy bills simultaneously increased and accordingly, ITV1 can be considered to more closely identify with the public. Both reports are exemplar of the constructed narrative of conflict, where large, profitable energy suppliers are implicitly inferred to be profiteering and acting against customer interests. On 10/6/14, both channels (lead story on ITV1; second on BBC1) reported that OFGEM had asked the “big six” why price decreases were not being passed on in the wake of falling wholesale gas prices. Figure 6.7 details ITV1’s report, which included an edited package from Joel Hills:

**Figure 6.7** ITV1 reports OFGEM's challenge to the "Big Six" on 10/6/14.



The report also included a short contribution from then Energy Minister, Ed Davey:

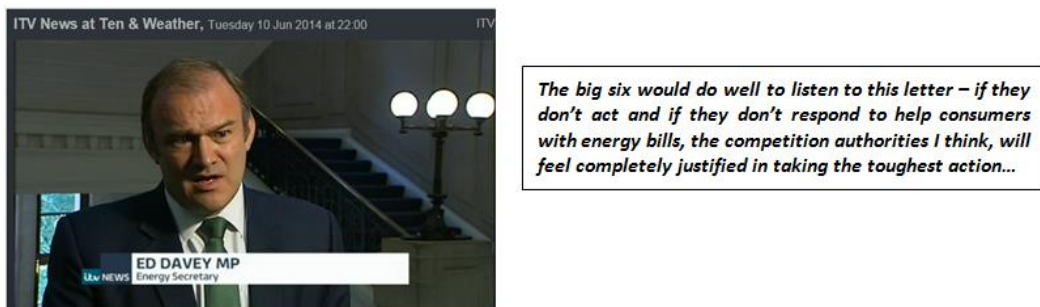


Figure 6.8 shows how BBC1 reported the story on the same day, the central element being another edited package by Industry and Employment Correspondent, John Moylan:

**Figure 6.8** BBC1 reports OFGEM's challenge to the "Big Six" on 10/6/14.



The report also included a contribution by then Shadow Energy Secretary, Caroline Flint:



*Labour have made it absolutely clear that if we win the next election, we will have a backstop power for the energy regulator to force the companies to pass the price falls on if they don't do it themselves...*

Figures 6.7 and 6.8 demonstrate that in addition to channel homogeneity in terms of format and content, report construction is also often similar as channels feature the same social actors. In both reports for example, there are contributions from OFGEM Chief Executive Dermot Nolan who maps the case against the energy firms, and an Energy U.K representative who subsequently responds. Further, both channels also use rhetorical contrast to develop a binary conflict, pitting energy suppliers against their customers. Rather than comparing household bills with corporate profitability, this time the comparison is between increasing bills and falling wholesale gas prices.

These events are exemplar of how an industry sector, having previously merited sparse coverage, attracted new editorial attention in 2014. Energy stories included several “human” news values such as suspicions of unfair practice, consumer unhappiness and the threat of strong corrective action. There is a renewed focus, post-crisis, on the need for more ethical and transparent practices following the financial crisis (see Linsley and Slack 2013). Business issues are simplified for the public, with greater emphasis placed on conflict, and a more populist approach focusing on the specific news values of negativity and resonance. BBC1’s embracing of a political discourse reflects the view that it privileges a government or establishment view (Hargreaves and Thomas 2002, p.6), and that EBF news often focuses on political elements (Schiffrin and Fagan 2013). There is no evidence suggesting ITV1 offer a milder commentary because of any concerns that this might damage potential advertising revenue; the relationship between advertising and content therefore, is not as clear-cut as traditional literature suggests.

### **6.5 Banks: the villains of the piece.**

The 2014 focus on energy companies is episodic rather than indicative of any continuing interest. It is emphatically shown in Table 6.3 that the banking/lending sector dominates business reporting on both channels in both years, with coverage increasing from 17.9% to 25.0% on ITV1, and from 23.8% to 29.6% on BBC1. The 2014



percentages are enhanced further in real terms, since a greater number of stories are involved. The dominance of banking mirrors the real world shift from manufacturing to an economy characterised by “information, cultural goods, communications, and intangible assets” where the financial sector is “pivotal” (Murdock 2015, p.6). As BBC1 Political Editor Nick Robinson suggested in a BBC1 report on 15/1/14, “it used to be the big six energy firms getting all the flak, now it’s the big six banks”. Table 6.5 shows the themes that dominated reporting about banks in 2007 and 2014.

**Table 6.5 Dominant themes where banks/lenders are the focus.**

Issue	BBC1		ITV1	
	2007	2014	2007	2014
<b>n = number of stories</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Unethical / illegal behaviour</b>	9.7	30.2	28.6	37.5
<b>Failing organisation</b>	45.2	7.5	50.0	2.5
<b>Executive pay</b>	6.5	13.2		20.0
<b>Profitability / sales levels / prices</b>	16.1	15.1		7.5
<b>Takeover / merger / sale / alliance</b>	16.1	5.7		
<b>Leadership issues</b>		9.4		7.5
<b>Customer / supplier relations</b>	6.5	9.4		
<b>Total of 7 other identified topics*</b>		9.5	21.4	25.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

\*No other topic amounts to more than 5.7% on BBC1 and 5.0% on ITV1 in 2014.

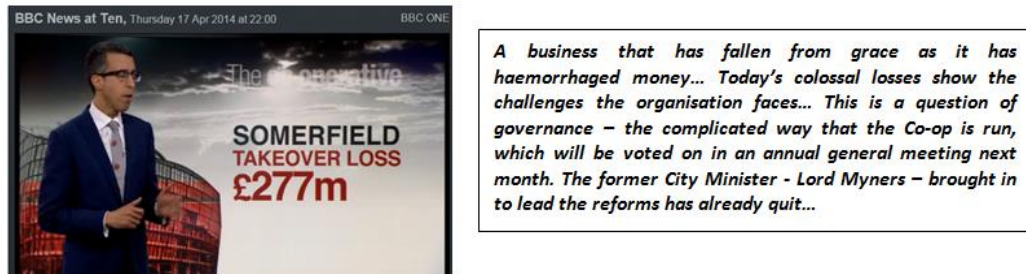
Table 6.5 shows that banking stories were notably different in 2014, as the emphasis switched from failing organisations (mainly Northern Rock) in 2007, to themes, in 2014, of unethical/illegal behaviour (30.2% of BBC1 stories and 37.5% of ITV1 stories), profitability (15.1% on BBC1; 7.5% on ITV1) and pay (13.2% on BBC1; 20.0% on ITV1).

Switching the focus from performance (failure) to questionable behaviour and pay for example, might be interpreted as a switch to new discourses of agency, where the crisis is implied to be the fault of individuals or groups (see for example, Martin 2013)<sup>3</sup>. This marks a contrast from 2007, when the U.K financial crisis was seen as having “floated in” from the U.S as an apparently natural phenomenon. Once again, it indicates a more “human” element to EBF news, and an attractive proposition to news editors since the assignation of blame is especially newsworthy (Kitzinger 2009). This new theme is exemplified by coverage of the banking arm of the Co-

<sup>3</sup> The title of Ian Martin’s book summarises the prevailing discourse of blame: *Making it Happen: Fred Goodwin, RBS and the Men who Blew up the British Economy*.

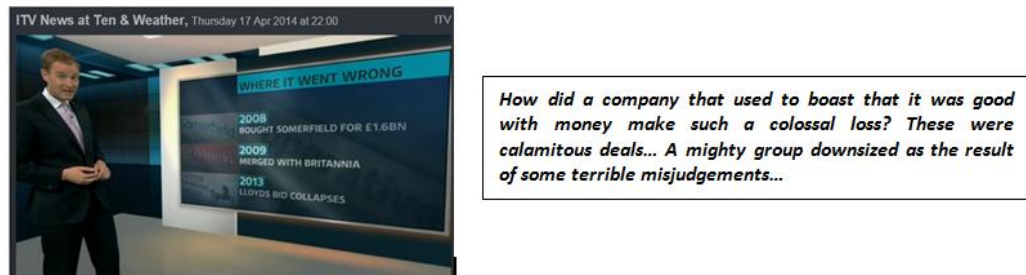
operative Group on 17/4/14. Figure 6.9 shows elements of the BBC1 report by Business Editor Kamal Ahmed, who describes considerable financial losses:

**Figure 6.9 BBC1's report about losses at the Co-operative Group on 17/4/14.**



The BBC1 report also features an interview with the acting CEO, and references to redundancies and the bank's general decline apparently due to numerous failed deals which bring "the question of governance" into focus. This issue of governance, and the Co-operative's intransigence was sufficiently problematic that a high-ranking politician engaged to reform the Co-operative (Lord Myners) had voluntarily left his post (see also Moynihan and Ford Rojas 2014; Treanor 2014). Figure 6.10 describes the narrative of the parallel ITV1 report from Joel Hills:

**Figure 6.10 ITV1's report about losses at the Co-operative Group on 17/4/14.**



Both reports use the same emotive reference to a "colossal loss"; such influential lexical choices are key in matters of representation (Conboy 2007; Richardson 2007; Machin and Mayr 2012). Both channels include interviews with the acting CEO and report job losses and the fall of an organisation that was once successful. This is another indication that aside from reporters and graphics, reports are often difficult to distinguish. Importantly too, the Co-operative's problems are reported to be manmade, rather than naturally occurring (Whittle and Muller 2011).



Exemplar of a need for scapegoats (Joutsenvirta 2013), in the live exchange with Joe Hills, ITV1 anchor Mary Nightingale begins with the question: “Is anyone going to carry the can for this?” In contrast to the problems at Northern Rock, the failure of the Co-operative Bank is presented as the result of unwieldy management and poor decisions. Accordingly, this case study informs wider conclusions about the ways EBF news is reported. Figure 6.11 shows how Robert Peston explained that the Co-operative is different to other banks during his BBC1 report on 11/3/14:

**Figure 6.11 BBC1 explains Co-operative principles on 11/3/14.**



*Some very grave looking gentlemen – the Rochdale Pioneers in 1865. The founders of the modern Co-operative movement, or the idea that a business owned by those who use it is fairer.*

The ethos of the Co-operative model is briefly touched upon by advocates (not journalists) on BBC1 (10/4/14) and ITV1 (11/3/14), and their contributions are shown in Figure 6.12:

**Figure 6.12 Descriptions of the Co-operative ethos.**

**ITV1**



*The Co-operative should be about values and principles like fairness, equality and solidarity... we should be striving to pay at least a living wage to all our employees, not just a fat cat executive pay-out.*

**BBC1**



*We know there are 6000 Co-operative movements that are independent, trading successfully across the UK ahead of the economy at large. We know that worldwide Co-operatives and mutuals again are dynamic and gaining market share.*

Though the Co-operative's different system of governance is referred to, such discourses are overwhelmed by more compelling reports about corporate failure, high-profile resignations, information leaks, questionably large salaries and most notably, the apparent professional and personal shortcomings of its former Chairman, Paul Flowers<sup>4</sup>. The Co-operative model of governance is shown to be beset with problems, and is further emphasised in Figure 6.13, which refers to reports from 11/3/14. Richard Edgar's description for ITV1 appears alongside criticism from a former Co-operative customer on BBC1:

**Figure 6.13 Descriptions of the Co-operative structure and strategy.**



Implicitly, due to its failure, the prevailing system of governance is seemingly unable to provide “fairness, equality and solidarity” (see Figure 6.12). Indeed, as Figure 6.13 shows, the perception of former Co-operative customer Andrew Baird is that the organisation had abandoned its core mission for more market-driven logics, which suggests that its route to recovery is the same as that for other banks. The Co-operative model is an alternative to the traditional model of bank governance, but on both channels, it is shown to be failed and broken.

<sup>4</sup> Flowers allegedly made some serious misjudgements while trying to steward a merger with Britannia. In May 2014, he was convicted of the possession of illegal drugs.

## **6.6 The knockabout nature of EBF news.**

EBF news is complex (Doyle 2007; Davis 2015; Schifferes 2015; Tambini 2015), and normatively, journalists should act on behalf of citizens (Schifferes and Coulter 2012) and untangle such complexities (Seymour 2009). Some argue that in order to engage the public, news should be simplified (see Langer 1998; Marr 2004, Temple 2006). Alongside the attendance to news values within EBF events, news editors reduce and reframe complex issues to make them easier for audiences to comprehend. In 2012, for example, the shareholder revolt at Barclays over executive remuneration was presented by BBC1, ITV1 and SKY in terms of conflict, protest and the simplification of shareholder dynamics, rather than any detailed explanations about background and implications (Thomas 2016).

Further, in reports about Northern Rock, ITV1 refer to famous scenes in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Figure 6.14 shows how they further simplify the “run on the bank” by drawing on the dramatic elements of events at Northern Rock as the story broke:

**Figure 6.14 ITV1’s report about “the run on the bank” on 14/9/07.**



James Mates articulates the crisis in terms of ignoring warnings, falling share prices, the withdrawal of £1 billion and a crashed internet site. These seem the obviously more sensational elements of the story. Moreover, investors were “trying” to retrieve their money, indicating that this might be problematic (see also Gillespie and Cornish 2013). Consumer Editor Chris Choi continues the report, and as part of a large moving graphic, he stands behind a building called “Northern Rock” and explains how subprime lending problems in the U.S caused the crisis:



*What should customers do now?*

The report takes a knockabout turn, as ITV1's "financial expert" (Cesarina Holm-Kander) attempts to persuade Northern Rock customers to not withdraw their money. She berates a male customer - a "bright guy" - implicitly suggesting his actions are foolhardy. Choi also quizzes a female customer, expressing surprise that she was intent on withdrawing *her* money:



*(To bank customer) This is a solvent institution, and my concern is that if a bright guy like you is doing it, no wonder we have queues down the street...*



*You have been told by our expert that your money is safe – will you now leave the branch and believe that? You won't? You're still going in there...*

The irony is that "branch deposits were actually the most stable of all deposits", and that they are "far more stable than the wholesale funding raised in the capital markets from sophisticated financial institutions" (Shin 2009, p.101). This however, was not mentioned. In sum, perhaps the most dramatic banking story for a century (Milne and Wood 2009) was expressed in slightly ridiculous, almost comedic terms, indicative of the ways in which EBF issues are simplified.

The events associated with Northern Rock represented the first tangible signs of the U.K financial crisis (Schifferes 2011; Gillespie and Cornish 2013; Schifferes and Knowles 2015), and amounted to a "dress rehearsal" for future banking bailouts (Martin 2013, p.17). Northern Rock's failure represented a moment when the

established model of 21<sup>st</sup> Century capitalism might have been fundamentally challenged; instead an apparently light approach to the drama and its newsworthiness took precedence.

Further, BBC1's coverage of EBF issues more generally might be viewed as more infotainment-based since, in both years, such news was generally delivered by Robert Peston, its Business Editor (2006 - March 2014) and then its Economics Editor (March 2014 - November 2015). Perhaps because of his apparent influence (Hulbert 2015; Schifferes and Knowles 2015; Shaw 2015), considered by some as excessive (see, inter alia, Robinson 2008; Schifferes 2011; Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2013; Butterick 2015), attention has focused on Peston himself. First, his increasingly informal appearance (see Figure 6.15) has been widely commented on (see Glanfield 2014; Media Monkey 2015; Peston 2015).

**Figure 6.15 The changing face of Robert Peston.**



In addition, Peston's unusual vocal style incorporating the "slight snaggings and elongations of words" (Lawson 2015a) and his general "eccentricity" have also been discussed (Day 2013; Gill 2015; Lawson 2015a), while others refer to his "ego" (Fay 2011, p.53). In sum, as a "stand out" TV correspondent (Lawson 2015a), some have expressed concerns that Peston "had stopped merely reporting the story, and had become the story itself... and the figure around whom the action moves rather than the person who simply reports the action" (Glover 2008).

Rather than facts and data prevailing (see Butterick 2015), the financial crisis brought EBF stories about human failing and greed, and a shift from drier, pre-crisis data-driven stories. Peston has enhanced the visual and vocal elements of EBF news

presentation, and aside from the content of the stories themselves, has introduced “an aggression and news breaking instinct to the whole culture” (Stockwell Group 2014). If journalists “are not just reporting a financial crisis” but also “performing it” (Fenton-O’Creevy 2008), then such “performances” can be reasonably interpreted as making news more dramatic, more mainstream, and by implication, because of the way it is delivered, less serious. Even if news agendas are increasingly harder (Chapter 6), some categories such as EBF news are treated more softly.

### **6.7 Reporting remuneration: a key EBF issue.**

Within the banking sector dominating EBF coverage, the issue of remuneration looms large and high salaries have been increasingly scrutinised since the financial crisis (Farmer et al. 2013; Davis 2015). The issue of executive remuneration has “important implications for our understanding of the globalisation of world commerce” (Conyon and Murphy 2000, p.669) and addresses a basic tenet of capitalism - that income is distributed unequally (Henderson and Frederickson 2001; Ott 2005). This imbalance has increased (see, inter alia, Judge 2010; Tilley 2010), and so the reason why executive remuneration is increasingly investigated might be explained by concerns about increasing inequality (McCall 2013; Joutsenvirta 2013).

By 2014, the emphasis on pay reflected widespread resentment about remuneration (Linsley and Slack 2013). The issue had gained traction during the “Shareholder Spring” of 2012, when investors expressed disapproval of the pay awards at numerous publicly listed U.K companies (Costello 2012; Macalister 2012). Excessive salaries paid to those complicit in the financial crisis grate with ordinary citizens, many of whom are experiencing financial strain (Thomas 2016), and such reporting represents a shift from economic analysis to ethical and moral logics (Moriarty 2009).

Only two stories relating to banker remuneration were identified in 2007, both appearing on BBC1. On 30/10/07, they reported that the CEO of Merrill Lynch was to receive a severance package of \$200 million. The single U.K-based story was broadcast on BBC1 on 26/3/07, when Robert Peston reported a pay award to then Barclays Chief Executive Bob Diamond. The report (see Figure 6.16), took the form of a two-way exchange between anchor Jon Sopel and Peston, who explained the salary details:



**Figure 6.16 BBC1 coverage of Barclays pay award 26/3/07.**



*Well, he's Bob Diamond; at £22 million looking rather happy there behind me... he runs its investment bank - now that's an industry where people earn staggering sums of money. At Goldman Sachs - the world leader in that industry - several people earn that kind of money, maybe even a bit more. Now, we live at a time when people with highly prized skills are earning unprecedented sums - it's true of investment bankers but it's also true of footballers, even chat show hosts. What it means is that the gap between the highest paid and most of the rest of us is widening - is that a good thing? Well, it's fast becoming one of the great debates of our age.*

Aside from some evaluative lexical choices (“staggering” and “unprecedented”), Peston offers little analysis. Indeed, by referring to “highly prized skills”, he might even be considered to be partly legitimising such sums. He does not mention the ethical issues regarding such salaries, or the research evidence challenging the deservedness of such remuneration. This resonates with traditional theories that journalists do not hold corporations sufficiently to account. Accordingly, such reporting is rather insipid, and by concentrating on the breaking of a U.K salary record and adding references to footballers and chat show hosts, BBC1 adheres to popular news values such as celebrity/elite discourses and novelty. In general, the issue is simplified and treated superficially. However, Peston’s suggestion that the ever-widening gap between rich and poor was one of the “great debates of our age” provides a guiding theme for this research (see Chapter 1).

Bank remuneration stories increased in 2014 and in all, the two channels featured 15 stories about banker pay. Amid the general pattern of homogeneity established in Chapter 6, some channel divergence can nevertheless be identified by analysing the coverage of executive pay. Firstly, Figure 6.17 shows parts of Peston’s report about Barclays on 11/2/14, which explains that despite a drop in profits, the bank was increasing bonus payments:

**Figure 6.17 Barclays’ falling profits and increasing bonuses on BBC1 on 11/2/14.**



*There are murky, hidden depths to bank results but at Barclays, what is clear is that the bonuses and incentives have risen by almost 10% to almost £2.5 billion while profits fell last year to almost a third...*

The report features Robert Peston interviewing then Barclays CEO Anthony Jenkins. Peston begins with this question:



*Now what a lot of people won't understand is how profits can fall but bonuses can rise...can you explain why that happens?*

Jenkins argues that in a global business operating from “Singapore to San Francisco”, there is a need to compete and attract the best talent. Peston allows the reply without interruption, and asks a second question:



*Does it damage the reputation of the retail bank and the commercial bank – this furore about bonuses year after grinding year?*

Jenkins responds that it is more a case of doing business the right way in the future. Again, this is unchallenged, with the obvious question as to why it was not apparently done “the right way” before remaining unasked. This emollient interviewing style is once again illustrated in Figure 6.18, which lists the questions Peston asked of Lloyds Banking Group CEO Antonio Horta-Osorio on 13/2/14:

**Figure 6.18 Robert Peston interviews Antonio Horta-Osorio on 13/2/14.**



*Just to be clear about this, your view is that at last, Lloyds is mended - that you are a normal, healthy bank again?*

*Are you absolutely sure that Lloyds has changed its ways and is now a better-behaved, reformed bank?*

While BBC1 might provide factual summaries, they do not necessarily adhere to normative ideals of EBF journalism. Asking whether “at last Lloyds is mended?” and whether you are “absolutely sure that Lloyds has changed its ways?” are mild probes, with low modality suffixes such as “is it your view” and “are you sure” inviting



predictably positive responses. Peston’s failure to interject, or to seriously challenge the bonus culture enables his interviewee to give a measured (and perhaps even, rehearsed) response to these non-threatening questions. Indeed, the exchange bears the hallmarks of a “trophy” interview, where corporate PR departments control tone and substance (Butterick 2015, p.95). Horta-Osorio predictably confirms that Lloyds has changed, and does so without challenge. Peston concludes his report thus:



*This return to the black for Lloyds means that privatisation for the bank will raise more money for taxpayers, but the scale of profits is likely before long to prompt criticism that this huge bank is now too powerful.*

Peston’s coda rhetorically asks whether banks are becoming too powerful - a question that might have been more usefully asked of the Lloyds CEO during the interview. The emergent conclusion is that despite there being a case of excess for the banks to answer, BBC1 are often complaisant, with executives allowed the space to develop their own narratives amid passive questioning. ITV1, in contrast, were more combative; Figure 6.19 includes key elements of their parallel report about Barclays, which begins with an introduction from anchor Mark Austin:

**Figure 6.19 Barclays’ falling profits and increasing bonuses on ITV1 on 11/2/14.**



*There is fierce criticism of Barclays tonight after announcing a 10% hike in bonuses for top staff, and a steep fall in profits. It has also confirmed plans to shed 7,000 jobs in the UK. Shares in the bank have fallen and today the Institute of Directors questioned whose interests are being served by the Barclays decisions.*

The report is continued by ITV1’s Economics Editor, Richard Edgar:



*There’s something a bit odd going on at Barclays; profits fell in the last year and the bank is cutting thousands of jobs...but for those who remain bonuses are up, and this from a bank which claims to be changing its culture for the better... the boss told me why...*

Edgar interviews Anthony Jenkins, who explains that based on “paper performance and competitive position”, they took the “right decision in the long term in interests of their shareholders”. Edgar interjects with incredulity:



*...You decided that the right thing to do was to **increase pay!** You are always encouraging us to look at the bottom line – the overall performance, and the overall performance of the bank has fallen and yet bonuses have risen. That is a reward for failure!*

Edgar continues the report with some preamble before interviewing Roger Barker from the Institute of Directors:



*The Barclays boss says he has to pay more to keep the best people, but that seems like an argument from another era; even the body that represents company bosses is critical...*

Barker questions whether paying executives bonuses “seven or eight” times their salaries was really appropriate. The report cuts back to the interview and Jenkins is asked about job losses. He explains that the bank needs less people, but Edgar interrupts once more:



***So there's more to come?"**  
When Jenkins hesitates, Edgar follows up with  
**"But there are more to come – you've spoken in the last about more to come – what's the scale?"***

Edgar's report concludes with a live exchange with anchor Mark Austin, who begins by noting that “Barclays are just the first of the high street banks to show its hand...”

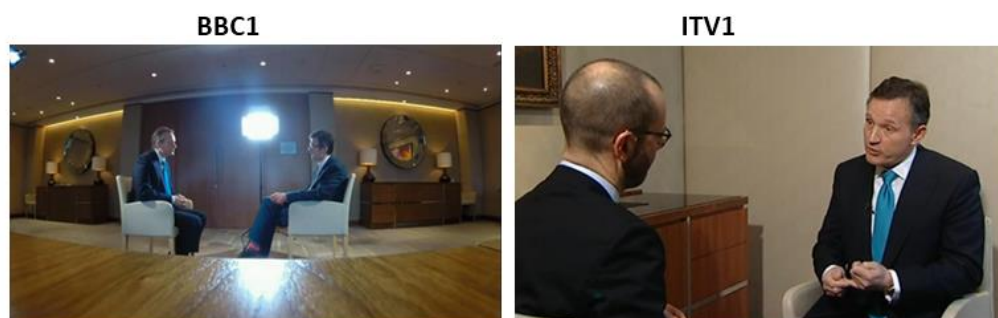


*Yes, but next we focus on those banks in which the Government or the taxpayers have a stake ...the first of those is Lloyds, and it reports on Thursday. It's had a rather better year than Barclays - its share price today closed at 83p and crucially it's been - since October - above the 73.6p that the government paid in the bailout. Now that means that its Chief Executive is eligible for a bonus of 3 million shares - they are worth about £2.5 million at today's price - he earned it, it's in his contract... we'll find out on Thursday whether he collects them...*

Continuing the homogeneity of channels evident throughout this research, these BBC1 and ITV1 reports were identical in length (both 187 seconds), similarly positioned within bulletins (2<sup>nd</sup> on ITV1, 3<sup>rd</sup> on BBC1) and have similar opening introductions. Both featured contributions from Anthony Jenkins and the Institute of Directors. Aside from this increasing convergence regarding bulletin content, structure and format however, the positions adopted by reporters Robert Peston (BBC1) and Richard Edgar (ITV1) when interviewing Anthony Jenkins are notably different.

Peston asks only moderately probing questions of Anthony Jenkins (“Can you explain?”, “Does it damage?”) which encourage predictable responses. Furthermore, he does not challenge Jenkins’ argument that CEOs operate in a global market, despite research showing that few executives move across borders (High Pay Centre 2013). On ITV1, Richard Edgar adopts a different editorial stance. Figure 6.20 shows that there are even differences in the staging of the interviews:

**Figure 6.20 Comparative settings for interviews with Anthony Jenkins on 11/2/14.**



Settings and locations have connotative significance (Machin 2007), and BBC1’s interview was conducted in a large room, the interviewer and interviewee facing each other suggesting symmetry and equality. However, in ITV1’s report, Anthony Jenkins appears more cornered. This might be coincidental, but nevertheless it

resonates with Edgar's more adversarial approach, including interrupting Jenkins and claiming a "reward for failure". In addition, Edgar does not accept the argument of pay being driven higher in global markets, dismissing it as "an argument from another era". Generally, Edgar holds Jenkins to account in a way that Peston does not.

The final live exchange on ITV1 between Edgar and Austin is further evidence of a more overtly critical position. Edgar contrasts Barclays' comparative failure with the prosperity of Lloyds, exemplar of how company results can be either enhanced or condemned when compared with others (Butterick 2015). The differing treatment of Anthony Jenkins supports conclusions that while BBC1 is more deferential towards elite personalities and institutions (Berry 2013a), ITV1 is more adversarial and "while remaining serious", appear "more in tune with the people's anxieties" (Cushion 2012, p.45). ITV's Head of News and Current Affairs, Michael Jermey<sup>5</sup>, claims a similar positioning for the channel more widely:

*People have always been at the heart of ITV news, and we think we are good at telling stories from a people's perspective - we're on a channel that used to be called "The People's Channel". There are many decades of us being good at people-centred views... (interview with Michael Jermey, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015).*

Despite their format, content and conventions becoming homogenous, BBC1 and ITV1 adopt different styles and approaches to EBF news. This difference in approach to EBF reporting was not revealed by quantitative methods, but is instead revealed by qualitative analysis, resonant of how the two approaches often complement each other (Cushion et al. 2015). These qualitative findings provide some expectations as to how PIE issues might be covered. For example, when compared with the established logics of a commercially funded news platform, ITV1 sometimes takes a surprisingly combative stance. Through the closer examination of its relationship with Barclays, it can be clearly demonstrated that any traditional assumptions that media defers to advertisers can be challenged. It is to this issue that the analysis now turns.

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<sup>5</sup> For the full transcript of this interview, please see Appendix 8.

## **6.8 Advertiser influence: Influence or impotence?**

Case studies enable critical realist research to identify “causal mechanisms” or “processes” (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014, p.24). One such mechanism in the realm of TV news provision is funding. ITV1 and BBC1 operate according to different regulatory burdens, and are also funded differently. Unlike BBC1, ITV1 is funded by advertising (Johnson and Turnock 2005). The ability of commercial broadcasting to generate advertising revenue is undisputed, especially since the exponential post-war increase in consumerism (Schiller 1995). The Broadcasting Act of 1990 reduced ITV’s regulatory burden in terms of public service (Cushion 2012; O’Malley 2001), and though some reduced obligations remain in place, in its current form, ITV is a “money-making television news service” and “answerable to shareholders” (Cushion 2012, p.52).

That its broadcast news is facilitated by advertising is potentially pivotal to the way ITV1 reports business, and more specifically, to how it reports the business of its sponsors and potential sponsors. This dilemma for commercial newsmakers has been especially debated within the deregulated and wholly commercial U.S broadcasting system. Herman and Chomsky (2002) for example, provide a damning critique, proposing that advertising shapes news output, and that newsmakers do not hold advertisers robustly to account. The chief concern is that sponsors will “discriminate against unsympathetic media institutions” (Herman and Chomsky 2002, p.16-17), and that programming will “often follow the dictates directly or indirectly, of their sponsors” (Schiller 1995, p.197). This may take the form of being “charitable to advertisers”, creating “a buying mood” among viewers, moderating “controversial” elements within stories about advertisers, and favouring high income groups who have most to spend (Baker 2014, p.44).

This critique is not directly transferrable to U.K broadcasting, since even though ITV1 is commercially-funded, it is still bound to adhere to public service principles<sup>6</sup>. However, the notion that commercial organisations might influence news reporting challenges the fundamentals of a free press (Winston 1994). Advertising revenue provided by huge multinationals, and banks in particular, represents considerable leverage within print journalism. In February 2015, for example, *Daily Telegraph* chief

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<sup>6</sup> ITV’s public service obligations are here <http://licensing.ofcom.org.uk/tv-broadcast-licences/current-licensees/channel-3/>

political commentator Peter Osborne reported that the newspaper had repressed stories about HSBC in order to retain the bank's advertising (Plunkett and Quinn 2015). Following his resignation from the paper, Osborne offered a clear example of commercial influence, directing his most explicit comments towards *Telegraph* Media Group Chief Executive Murdoch MacLennan:

*Winning back the HSBC advertising account became an urgent priority. It was eventually restored after approximately 12 months. Executives say that Murdoch MacLennan was determined not to allow any criticism of the international bank ... (Osborne 2015).*

Large advertisers are clearly important to print media, and even more so to free-to-view internet sites. However, perhaps because of a general decline in newspaper readership (Turvill 2015), advertising revenues are reduced (Jackson 2015) and therefore especially precious. The imperative to retain large advertising accounts may not be so intense within television and further, the broadcast medium presents a high-profile opportunity many commercial organisers will be keen to secure.

As explained in Chapter 5, in 2007, though commercial breaks appeared elsewhere in ITV programme schedules, they were absent from late evening ITV1 news, and the bulletin was only punctuated by the local news disconnect, before then returning to a summary of headlines. By February 2014, despite a period of advert-free news (Holmwood 2015), ITV1 had re-introduced the advertisement break that traditionally characterised past formats of *News at Ten* (Harrison 2000, p.95). This however, was sporadic, and advertisement breaks were identified in only 41.4%<sup>7</sup> of ITV1 bulletins in the 2014 sample.

As a precursor to what follows in section 6.11, in 2012, insurance company Aviva was a major advertiser on ITV1, and featuring vignettes starring comedian Paul Whitehouse in a series of advertisements (Kollewe 2011; Fletcher 2013). Aviva sponsorship was associated with ITV1's drama *Downton Abbey* (Aviva 2009; Sweney 2011), but at the same time it was one of several corporations experiencing shareholder dissent over executive remuneration.

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<sup>7</sup> Advertisement breaks were present within 101 of the 244 bulletins in the sample.



Figure 6.21 shows excerpts from two ITV1 reports on the issue:

**Figure 6.21** ITV1 reports executive remuneration at Aviva on 3/5/2012 and 8/5/12.



*This is one of our biggest companies – their slogan is “get the Aviva deal”. Today, their shareholders said “we don’t quite fancy that deal”, and they actually lost the vote over executive pay. It wasn’t just a few red faces – they actually lost...*



*Are big firms increasingly finding themselves out of step? At our biggest insurer - Aviva – performance did not match up to pay...*

In Figure 6.21, ITV1’s Business Editor Laura Kuenssberg ridicules the slogan “Get the Aviva deal”, and refers to “red faces”. She goes further in her implied criticism by intertextually referring to the Aviva advertisements actually used on ITV1, creating a play on words about their executive remuneration being “out of step” with public opinion. This is a direct reference to Whitehouse’s ballroom dancing in the accompanying footage and more significantly, a preliminary indicator that it cannot be assumed that ITV1 will be deferential to their sponsors.

### **6.9 ITV1’s relationship with Barclays: the fearless coverage of a channel sponsor.**

While ITV1 advertising rates are not officially publicised, from data that is available (for example, TV Agency 2013; Guerillascope 2015), it appears that a single 30-second advertisement on ITV1 during the “late peak” 8pm-11pm costs between £35,000 and £50,000. Of the 101 commercial breaks identified in 2014, 84 were single advertisement breaks all featuring only Barclays, one of the banks dominating financial sector coverage. Therefore, by a conservative estimate, Barclays spent at least £3 million on these advertisements in 2014, aside from any additional premiums to secure exclusivity within the advertising break. Consequently, these

Barclays advertisements presented a potential dilemma for editors when deciding how stories should be presented. Establishing the tone and content of Barclays stories within 2014 offers some insight into the commercial channel's willingness to adopt an uninhibited approach to reporting the corporate workings (but more often "problems") of their sponsors.

This combative approach taken by ITV1 towards Barclays predates 2014. In 2012 for example, Barclays experienced shareholder dissent, and in an examination of how this dissent was reported on BBC, ITV and SKY, ITV1 anchor Alastair Stewart refers to "remarkable" barracking", "shareholder fury" and "bumper pay" (Thomas 2016, p.105). These are all lexical selections indicating that the remuneration in question is high, even in the context of executive pay. Reporter Laura Kuenssberg describes boos and derision at the Barclays meeting, and of the three reports, only ITV1 mentioned that Barclays prevented the attendance of news cameras and protestors. The tone and framing of the ITV1 report is notably critical, and challenges any notion that the channel takes a mild approach to corporate affairs (for a detailed analysis, see Thomas 2016).

Table 6.6 shows all Barclays stories on ITV1 in 2014, and how these corresponded to the pattern of advertising breaks immediately before and after each bulletin in question. The term "Barclays only" refers to breaks that feature only Barclays advertising messages:

**Table 6.6 Barclays stories and advert breaks in 2014 on ITV1.**

Date	Advertising break details	Surrounding advertising pattern
3/2/14	No advert break	<b>Barclays only</b> advert on 24/1, 10/2, 12/2, 14/2
11/2/14	No advert break	<b>Barclays only</b> advert on 24/1, 10/2, 12/2, 14/2, 17/2, 19/2
17/2/14	Barclays in advert break	<b>Barclays only</b> advert on 17/2, 19/2, 21/2. 24/2, 26/2, 28/2
24/4/14	No advert break	<b>Barclays only</b> advert on 22/4, 23/4, 25/2,
7/5/14	Barclays in advert break	<b>Barclays only</b> advert on 7/5, 14/5, 16/5

From Table 6.6, the report on 3/2/14 is not especially noteworthy, since it lasts only 11 seconds and simply explains that CEO Anthony Jenkins had refused his bonus. On 11/2/14 and 24/4/14, there were no Barclays adverts punctuating the ITV1 bulletins, but there were adverts on adjacent days, meaning that news and commentary about Barclays was in close proximity (the day before and day after) to the bank's advertising messages. The report on 11/2/14 has already been described in detail



(see Figure 6.19). It featured an adversarial approach by Richard Edgar who interrupted Anthony Jenkins, expressed incredulity, and presented a strong contrast with a bank that was apparently performing better. Figure 6.22 describes a Barclays story on 24/4/14, reporting a dissenting vote at their AGM. It was introduced by Julie Etchingham:

**Figure 6.22** ITV1's report about Barclays on 24/4/14.



*Barclays has suffered one of its worse shareholder revolts over its pay and bonuses. The bank's bosses were shouted at by those who don't like bonuses going up when profits, and their dividends, are going down. One big shareholder was pretty fed up too; our business editor Joel Hills witnessed the Barclays bonus backlash.*

The report is continued by Joel Hills, who comments over a small vignette performed by protestors outside the meeting, where one "banker" is handed a handful of banknotes:



*Barclays Bank has attracted plenty of interest in recent years. Today though, was a chance for the bank's owners – its shareholders – to have their say, from pension funds to members of the public.*

Hills asks some Barclays shareholders whether they are "happy with the way the bank is being run" and receives various responses:



*They pay far too much money to far too many people.*



*These people have been picked because they know what they're doing, and I have to trust them, so if they don't give them- if they don't give them a good bonus they'll go elsewhere...*



*Just don't think the banking industry as a whole - not just Barclays - the whole lot - they're not doing their job properly.*

After explaining that while profits have decreased and bonus payments have increased, Hills continues his commentary:



*Shareholders always have a grumble at an event like this, but inside it got quite heated. One shareholder accused the board of "management greed" - another said we're paying for Manchester United but we're getting Colchester United, and when it came to the vote, one third of the bank's shareholders failed to support its remuneration report, including some big names like Standard Life.*



*All very embarrassing for the Barclays Chief Executive, but at the end of the day, the revolt failed, every motion was carried, and those bonuses will be paid, which is interesting, because just two days ago, the Business Secretary warned that if business didn't deal with excessive pay awards, he would act, and he name-checked Barclays.*

The report cuts to a contribution from Dr Roger Barker from the Institute of Directors, who responds to Hills' question whether "it is enough to avoid government intervention - to avoid legislation?":



*...as long as shareholders aren't really exercising a strong voice in corporate governance, it invites a regulatory response and that really is the long term concern about these ties of votes and this sort of pay award.*

The critical tone of this report is established at an early stage, with Julie Etchingham's visceral description of a "Barclays bonus backlash" and shareholders being "fed up". Joel Hills continues by reminding viewers that criticism of Barclays is not new. Further, the leitmotif of conflict is constructed through the *vox populis*, the first of which highlights excess. By way of balance and showing a plurality of views, the second *vox populis* refers to the dangers of not paying bonuses (staff retention). The female shareholder explains she has no choice but to trust the management, though her words hardly represent an endorsement. Hills makes the rhetorical and metaphorical contrast between Manchester United and Colchester United, which many viewers would recognise as comparing a successful and famous football team with one that is neither. All three shareholder discourses therefore, are critical. Furthermore, the event is described as "embarrassing" for Barclays, intensified by emphasising that Vince Cable had specifically referred to the bank when talking about remuneration excess.

Moreover, a dissenting vote of "one third of shareholders" might be newsworthy after the revolt of 2012, but such shareholder votes are far from unprecedented, and occurred regularly over the preceding decade (Peston 2012). In short, this was a story that ITV1 might have quite legitimately not reported at all; indeed, the parallel BBC1 bulletin did not do so. That ITV1 ran the story reconfirms notions that newsroom priorities and news values might take precedence over sponsor preferences.

While Barclays themselves are subject to criticism, and even some elements of "schadenfreude" (Thomas 2016, p.109), the question as to whether intervention is appropriate within a free-market system is not asked. When unhappy with their returns or the behaviour of the companies they own, large shareholders have the choice of "exiting" (selling up), "voicing" (expressing discontent) and "loyalty" where they remain passive (Hirschman 1970). Evidence suggests that institutional shareholders are often passive (Goergen and Renneboog 2001; Faccio and Lasfer 2002; Sheehan 2011), so when Dr Roger Barker suggests that shareholder inaction invites a "regulatory response" and that this was a concern, he apparently sets state intervention as negative. The underlying message is that market forces should be left unimpeded, and Joel Hills does not challenge this mantra.

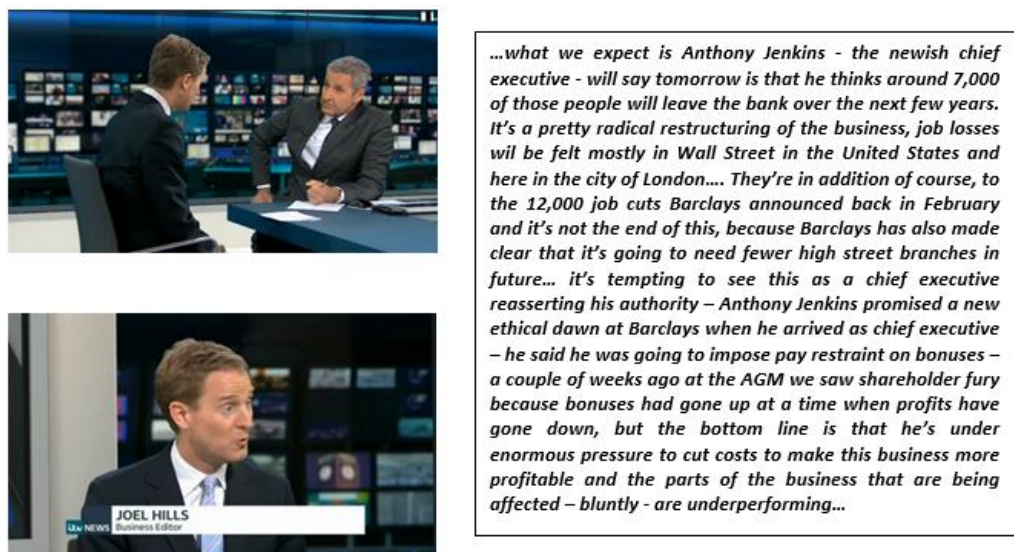
There were also single Barclays adverts punctuating bulletins carrying news stories about the bank on 17/2/14 and 7/5/14. Figure 6.23 describes the entire Barclays story on 17/2, where anchor Nina Hossain reports that three Barclays executives had been charged with conspiracy to defraud:

**Figure 6.23** ITV1's report about Barclays on 17/2/14.



At 16 seconds long, this is a short report (BBC1's parallel story was 17 seconds long). Rather than a description of "three former Barclays workers" which anonymises those involved, these executives are specifically named, resonant with the usual protocols associated with the reporting of crime. Furthermore, this story appeared barely two minutes of news time following a Barclays advertisement, which supports the notion that ITV1 takes an abrasive approach towards its sponsors. In the Barclays story reported on 7/5/14 however (Figure 6.24), the story was last in the pre-advert segment, meaning that it segued directly into a Barclays advertisement. Mark Austin explains that Barclays are shedding jobs as part of its programme to reform its workforce and bonus system. The report then cuts to a live two-way with Joel Hills:

**Figure 6.24** ITV1's report about Barclays on 7/5/14.



Hills appears to suggest that jobs might be sacrificed by the Chief Executive in order to assert his authority. Moreover, the promise of a “new ethical dawn” implicitly points to the past being *unethical*. From Hills’ commentary, it seems that job cuts are preferred, for example, to any draconian measures directed towards executive pay. As before, there is implicit and explicit criticism of Barclays, further amplified since once again, BBC1 did not run this story.

Despite pressures to adhere to the political economy of their news organisations, some editors determinedly profess to be immune from external pressures from advertisers (see Parsons 1989), and ITV1 typify such independence. Indeed, in response to a question about the relationship between the newsroom and the corporations that might also fund the station via advertising, Michael Jerney claims that “I don’t have very much to say because it doesn’t enter my mind”. Furthermore, he asserted:

*...journalists cover stories we think our viewers will find interesting and sure, we’re on a commercial channel funded by advertisers... but I don’t know who’s advertising at any given time... (interview with Michael Jerney, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015).*

After explaining that “the advertising sales team can put breaks where they want to across the schedule”, he continued:

*...I have never had a discussion with the advertising people at any point about those [Barclays] ads - they’ve kept running, and I’ve never had a discussion with the programme editor about what stories they chose to run... so there is a disconnect between the two... (interview with Michael Jerney, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015).*

Continuing with the refuting of any wider symbiosis with elite business figures, he asserted that:

*Our journalists obviously talk to people in the City. I spend no time whatsoever talking to people in the City... we all have biases and backgrounds but if someone is looking for a power elite (in ITV1) not in touch with the real world, that’s not the case... (interview with Michael Jerney, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015).*



These are perhaps predictable responses, but should be taken at face value. However, ITV1 are not “charitable to advertisers”, and because of their segueing from critique to advert, they do not apparently create “a buying mood” or moderate any controversy about Barclays (see Baker 2014). Moreover, by attending to the perceptions of ordinary people (such as the shareholders outside the AGM), neither do ITV1 obviously favour high-income groups. In sum, and even aside from Michael Jermey’s explanations, there is no on-screen evidence of any deference to Barclays, even despite the bank’s considerable sponsorship.

#### **6.10 Barclays adverts: getting their retaliation in first?**

The Barclays advertisements punctuating the bulletins in question promote very different corporate activities to those discussed in the reports they were adjacent to. They confirm claims that advertisements have production values “at least as high as the programming they interrupt” (Lewis et al. 2005, p.463). At between 30 and 40 seconds long, the Barclays adverts were of average length for a TV commercial, and featured self-contained vignettes, pictorially represented in Figure 6.25:

**Figure 6.25 Barclays adverts punctuating ITV1 News during 2014.**



Running clockwise from top left, these commercials explain:

- How a small business owner moved house and how a Barclays mortgage enabled her to “enjoy family life more”.
- How a blind comedian uses Barclays ATM machines that have been adapted for the visually impaired.

- How a Barclays “Digital Eagle” taught an elderly man to make internet contact with his nephew.
- How a couple running a small hotel benefit from Barclays networking events.
- How a young man became a more confident speaker because of the Barclays “Life Skills” programmes.

These services focus on human consequences and life enhancement, rather than the more traditional and prosaic aspects of banking. They promote accessible, positive messages about how Barclays improve lives; as Jerney correctly observed, “quite a lot of those brand spots for Barclays were about young people” (interview with Michael Jerney, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015). Mindful that corporate motivations can only be inferred from actions and behaviour (Merrett 1968), it is not possible to extend beyond speculating about the intentions regarding the content and positioning of the Barclays adverts within ITV1 bulletins. Accordingly, the levels of agency within ITV1 and Barclays are unclear. However, the adjacency of Barclays news reports to their adverts makes it clear that while ITV1 news bulletins benefit from their sponsorship, they are also prepared to report pejorative stories. Despite ITV’s willingness to provide critical commentary of Barclays, what is in more doubt is whether the free market economic system that allows them to operate is subject to the same sort of censorious appraisal.

These circumstances cannot be considered within a vacuum, and can be mapped to the wider context of media advertising. While advertising in newspapers has decreased, on TV it is thriving (Durrani 2015; Hammett 2015; IBSA 2015) and consequently, perhaps ITV1 can afford to take a more robust approach. Therefore, in anticipation of the news reporting they might be subjected to, Barclays might have strategically positioned these adverts. Michael Jerney suggests a less deliberate strategy, noting that since the channel is only permitted to run “40 minutes of advertising between 6pm and 11pm at an average of about 8 minutes per hour”, the ITV1 advertising team run those minutes around the programmes “with the biggest audiences”.

It can be reasonably assumed that being the sole sponsor within an advertising break enables the advertisement to stand out, since there is no competing “noise”. Further, it is difficult to take issue with Michael Jerney, when he suggests people might also

be keen to advertise during news bulletins since they represent “a serious environment within which to see your advertisement” (interview with Michael Jerney, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015). The lighter and more “human” nature of advertising content might also be promoted as a pre-emptive move to counter any negative Barclays stories, as they perhaps strive to “create their own buying mood” (Baker 2014, p.44). In other words, as Lewis et al. (2005) suggest, television advertising content is ideologically active; perhaps the same might be said about their operational positioning. Of course, the decision-making process and agency regarding the placement of these advertisements is unknown.

However, that they appear in such close proximity to stories implicitly critical of Barclays might be because of ITV1’s lack of concern about offending their corporate sponsors. Michael Jerney confirms that adverts can be withdrawn by sponsors at short notice. That Barclays did not do so when they must have suspected some negative coverage on that evening’s ITV1 bulletin supports the proposition that the bank might have been attempting to counter such negativity. Understanding that advertiser influence could not be relied upon, Barclays might have anticipated that their own action was required. In general, and notwithstanding such speculation, what seems more certain is that the Barclays case study shows that the citing of advertiser influence over programme content as a potential news influencer (Herman and Chomsky 2002) does not fully explain the provision of news provided by U.K commercial broadcasters.

Furthermore, the Barclays example is another indicator that where once it might have been a data-heavy specialism, EBF news is now a more mainstream, human-centred discipline driven by news values. The approach taken by ITV1 suggests that EBF news has been, to some degree, redefined by the financial crisis. For example, while financial sector actors were previously recognised for their resilience following the 2005 terrorist bombings in London, the same elite group were now seen as complicit in the global crisis, and responsible for “the hardship inflicted on the lives of working people” (Kelsey 2012, p.286).

In sum, “individuals and institutions” that were previously revered “suddenly became widely detested” (Whittle and Mueller 2012, p. 112). While Kelsey (2014) shows how post-crisis, bankers are portrayed as having “mythological trickster traits”, Whittle



and Mueller (2012) found that under scrutiny, bankers are constructed as villains with moral voids, yet see themselves as “victims”. However, if the financial crisis tempered banker pay and bonuses, from the 2014 reports about executive pay on BBC1 and ITV1, it is hard to contest that “the pre-crisis remuneration culture soon returned” (Joutsenvirta 2013, p.460).

Politicians might be thought of as either having the agency to intervene in executive remuneration, or to be ineffectual in the face of “market forces” (Joutsenvirta 2013, p.474). This could be the choice between regulating the banking industry with salary caps and so on, or allowing the sector to do as it wishes, even in the face of tangible dissent. If this is the case, while politicians can decide on party and personal standpoints, TV news channels can also frame such issues within the same range of choice. Schifferes (2011) asks whether EBF reporting has risen to the challenge of “providing the essential guide and companion as our economic and financial world is remade once again”. The conclusion here is that the answer can only be “partly”. As will be shown, while TV journalism takes an adversarial approach on personal and organisational levels, in the broadest terms it is essentially silent, and the overarching economic system emerges from coverage unscathed.

#### **6.11 The relentless promotion of neoliberalism.**

While their tone and approach to EBF news may differ, as with their conventions, format and general agenda it is evident that BBC1 and ITV1 are united in their general approach to capitalism. Both could examine alternatives to neoliberal economics, but because growth is presented as a panacea (see section 6.2), this is unlikely. This failure on the part of both channels to meet the expectations of public service broadcasting is exemplified by further analysis of banking sector coverage. Figure 6.26 details a BBC1 report on 15/1/14 regarding plans to cap banker bonuses. This report offers journalists the chance to consider the political and regulatory choices. Capping bonuses, for example, might be interventionist (and therefore consistent with a Keynesian approach), but leaving them unchecked is indexical of a free-market approach. Huw Edwards begins by explaining the issue in simple terms:

**Figure 6.26 BBC1's reports the potential cap on Banker's bonuses on 15/1/14.**



*Mark Carney – the Governor of the Bank of England says he doesn't support new plans to limit bankers' bonuses... Mr Carney told MPs that this was not the right way to control pay, but Labour's Ed Miliband says any attempt for example by RBS which is largely state owned to pay the maximum bonus should be blocked by ministers. Our Political Editor Nick Robinson has more details.*

In his edited package, Political Editor Nick Robinson gives a brief summary before cutting to a parliamentary exchange between the two main party leaders. Labour's Ed Miliband questions the Prime Minister as to whether he thinks it is acceptable that RBS should give 100% bonuses to those already earning multi-million pound salaries. David Cameron responds thus:



*If there are any proposals to increase overall pay, that is the pay and bonus bill at RBS, at the investment bank, if there are any proposals for that, we will veto it.*

After another brief, factual summary, the report returns to the parliamentary exchange:



*When ordinary families are facing the cost of living crisis, surely he can say that for people earning a million pounds, a bonus of 1 million should be quite enough...*



*He comes here every week – he comes on every week to complain about a problem created by the Labour Party – last week it was betting, this week it's banking – where is the apology for the mess they made of RBS in the first place?*

Nick Robinson resumes his report:



*...It may be bonuses that really set people's pulses racing, but what worries policymakers is the fact that the big banks aren't loaning enough money to small businesses. The answer everyone seems to agree is more competition. Later this week, Ed Miliband will unveil a proposal to cap the size of those banks to force them to offload some branches to try to get more competition.*

Using presupposition, Robinson concludes that everyone feels that the solution to lending inertia is more competition - in other words, extending the market rather than regulating it. This assumption is made, it seems, based on the opinions of elite politicians, who, while they might debate the nuances, do not challenge the wider, prevailing banking system which is where, after all, "capitalism red in tooth and claw is still alive and kicking" (Morgan and Whitley 2012, p.39). Figure 6.28 describes how ITV1 reported this story. Anchor Mark Austin introduces a report which is then continued by Deputy Political Editor Chris Ship:

**Figure 6.27** ITV1's report about the potential cap on Banker's bonuses on 15/1/14.



*It's that time of year when bankers debate how big their bonuses should be. Just as many families worry about how they pay the post-Christmas credit cards. But for RBS, it gets political, because for bonuses to be bigger than one year's salary banks now need shareholder approval – fine for Barclays and HSBC, but RBS shareholders are all of us. So the Labour leader attempted to turn this annual row to his advantage today by making a point about banker's earnings with which it is hard to disagree.*

The report cuts to the same Parliament exchange featured by BBC1:



*Surely, he can say that for people earning a million pounds, a bonus of 1 million should be quite enough.*



*What I've said very clearly is that the remuneration - the total pay bill at that investment bank - must come down.*

Chris Ship resumes his report:



*It meant Mr Cameron was invited to reject huge bonuses, but didn't...*

The report cuts to an interview between Ship and then Business Secretary Vince Cable. Ship asks Cable how the Government would react to a proposal from RBS to pay someone a bonus in excess of 100% of their salary:



*I don't want to get into hypotheticals – what I would urge is that the bank must think about restraint – people in this country are suffering a squeeze on their living standards because of the financial crisis, that RBS were at the heart of and helped to cause it.*

Ship's package covers the unequivocal opinions expressed by both Parliamentary Select Committee member Andrew Tyrie MP and Bank of England Governor Mark Carney. Both say that bonus caps are not the correct solution. Ship concludes his commentary: commas





*The purpose of Labour's plan to cap bonuses here today was to place Ed Miliband on the side of consumers and position David Cameron on the side of the big banks, but what Labour didn't count on was the Governor of the Bank of England making clear what side he was on, and it wasn't Labour's. And that rather had the effect of taking the wind out of Labour's sails.*

Finally, in a live studio exchange, Austin asks Business Editor Laura Kuennsberg about the fears behind capping bonuses. Kuennsberg answers:



*...there has been a lot of tightening up of the rules on banker's pay in the last couple of years, and even though it's still stratospheric compared to the vast, vast majority of most of us, if you squeeze down pay on the bankers too far, for RBS, they might lose people to rivals – there's anecdotal evidence that that's already taking place... And in terms of our country and our whole banking industry which pays a lot of tax, there's the risk that they might go off to other countries where they will get paid much more and they don't have to put up with this level of hassle... What's newer is a real squeeze from the City authorities, who are making people in senior banking jobs jump through more and more hoops in order to fill the posts. You may feel that's the right thing to do, but City sources are telling me that's making it harder and harder, almost by the day, to persuade people to take on these really important jobs. Frankly, some people just aren't worth – uh – feel it's just not worth putting up with the hassle. There are some big jobs empty – for example at the moment, RBS doesn't have a finance director – he's leaving and going off elsewhere. Now many of us and many of our viewers will feel "tough – good riddance – see you later – we don't want bankers here anyway", but it's a big important industry that pays a lot of tax and there's a danger – we have to be careful about how far we go...*

This story is inherently political, and both introductions frame it accordingly. Further degrees of structural and narrative homogeneity between the channels are also present, since both feature the parliamentary exchange between Cameron and Miliband, the footage of Mark Carney being questioned by a Commons Select Committee and the use of similar graphics explaining the story's numerical aspects. Further, qualitative analysis reveals that although both channels flirt with the issue of whether neoliberalism should be challenged, neither fully engage with it. ITV1's Chris Ship gets closest to the broader issue of whether governments should take action on

bankers' pay, when he suggests that David Cameron "was invited to reject huge bonuses but didn't". This point, however, is not developed further.

Notions of government intervention are hardly supported by some neutral comments by Vince Cable, which suggest that it is the banks that need to practice self-restraint, rather than having this forced upon them. By expressing a wish not to discuss "hypotheticals", he appears to dismiss even the *notion* of intervention. Moreover, Laura Kuenssberg's cautionary tone suggests that if bonuses are capped, the sector might relocate, tax revenues may fall, and senior roles - essential for sensible stewardship - would be less attractive. This represents a robust defence of the banking sector, but the question as to whether such bonuses are justified during austerity is left to the parliamentary exchange, and is otherwise not commented upon journalistically. Some insight into how both channels miss the opportunity to debate the nature of financialised or "casino capitalism" can be gleaned from David Cameron's words (Figure 6.28), as he responds to claims that the Government should intervene at RBS:

**Figure 6.28 David Cameron's responses to bonus capping at RBS.**



On BBC1, Cameron says he will veto attempts to increase the total pay and bonus bill. On ITV1, he says the total pay bill must come down. This may be considered as "hedging", "circumlocution" and creating an obscuring "fog" (see Resche 2004), since Cameron appears to support *something*, which is actually a limit on the total RBS pay

budget. This is different to vetoing bonus payments, since increased salaries and bonuses are still fully possible, presumably so long as some counterbalancing action occurs elsewhere. Enforcing redundancies boosts profitability (Dial and Murphy 1995); here they might be used to protect bonus payments by reducing overall salary expenditure. On BBC1, Nick Robinson notes that senior manager numbers are decreasing, but does not explain that safeguarding high executive remuneration might result in a reduction of lower level jobs. Seemingly, both channels fail to address whether allowing unfettered market forces to prevail is appropriate in a post-crisis economic landscape, where “humanistic ideals such as honesty, moderation, and care for others” are more prominent (Joutsenvirta 2013, p.474).

It cannot be assumed, post-crisis, that any shift from market-based statistical data towards more human elements means that financial elites are subjected to a re-energised watchdog function within TV journalism. Take for example, Robert Peston’s report on BBC1 on 3/2/14, describing how Lloyds Bank had improved its performance (Figure 6.29). Anchor Huw Edwards explains that Lloyds was to sell around £5 billion worth of shares to the public, but that the prevailing share price had fallen after the announcement that £1.8 billion was being allocated to settle claims caused by mis-selling Payment Protection Insurance (PPI). Robert Peston’s subsequent report, however, puts a very positive spin on what many would consider a financial scandal:

**Figure 6.29 BBC1’s report on the Lloyds Banking Group story on 3/2/14.**



Members of the public then report the impact of their compensation:



*(My brother) bought a motor vehicle, he runs a car so his taxation on fuel and what not so yeah – it has definitely gone back into the economy...*



*We discussed what we would do with the money and seeing as we haven't been aboard we decided that ...that's what we'd do and we treated ourselves...*

Peston describes the funds set aside for compensating customers, but frames this in positive terms, referring to the consequent boost to the economy and the benefits to the public in terms of lifestyle. Growth is championed once again, boosted by the spending of those who have received windfalls due to the unfair business practices of many within the banking sector. While the former is “spun” as an advantage, the latter is barely mentioned. Put differently, the reasons behind the systemic failings are given much less attention, as it is implied once again, that markets will self-manage, self-adjust and ultimately, self-heal.

### **6.12 The partial redefining of EBF news.**

Ways in which EBF topics are presented are likely to have ideological influence over audiences (Parsons 1989), and it seems clear that particular words and images can both strengthen or mitigate such underlying messages. In the case of Northern Rock, such was the apparent influence of some journalists (Hulbert 2015), that some people even blamed them for the “run on the bank”.

Chapter 5 demonstrated that in terms of operational conventions and agendas, news on BBC1 and ITVC1 is increasingly homogeneous. This is further supported by the data presented in this chapter, but qualitative investigation reveals that even if topics, times and typologies are similar, the two channels take different approaches to EBF reporting. Despite being the most trusted source of financial information during a crisis (Schifferees 2015), BBC1 are deferential towards corporations and their



affairs. On the other hand, ITV1 are often more combative and questioning. Consequently, and as demonstrated by the Barclays case study, suggestions that commercial logics and advertiser influence shape news output are challenged. In fact, according to the data presented here, there may be no clear correlation between advertising and news output. While neither channel offers ideal coverage, it can be concluded that ITV1's approach to EBF reporting is often nearer to the normative watchdog ideal than that taken by BBC1.

Both channels however, must contend with the omnipotent challenge of providing meaningful background and context in television reports only a few minutes long, even if, in the words of journalist John Lloyd, they are "the one place I think you could make a bit of difference"<sup>8</sup>. On both channels, the tendency to simplify is exemplar of "image crowding out rational analysis" (Bird, 2000, p.221), reflective of the debate asking whether "dumbing down" serious news is unhelpful (Franklin 1997; McNair 2000) or engages wider audiences (Temple 2006). Simpler interpretations offered particularly on ITV1 might be useful for audiences struggling to understand complex issues. Indeed, Esser and Umbricht (2014, p. 244) propose that so long as news remains more about substance than style, more interpretive approaches to news "may even contribute to an enriched public sphere". The simplification of EBF news is not therefore, fundamentally flawed, as long as it concentrates on content rather than stylistic flourishes.

There is a compelling case that the financial crisis functioned as a "critical juncture" for media coverage (Kalogeropoulos 2014, p.13). While public trust in both politicians and institutions is in decline (Schifferes 2015), there is evidence to show that in 2014, EBF news reporting on BBC1 and ITV1 embraced more human elements and other news values editors and audiences prefer. This is reflected in the abandonment of ITV1's short market summary during the research period of 2007-2014. Some 20 years after Winston (1994) reported a general dissatisfaction from his practitioner and business sample that TV coverage of EBF issues focused on personal aspects, by scrutinising corporate and personal actions, the specialism has completed its journey

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<sup>8</sup> John Lloyd was a contributor on BBC Radio 4 "the Media Show" broadcast on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

to the mainstream, transitioning from “Wall Street” to “Main Street” (Joutsenvirta 2014, p.474; Bromley 2015), and from “city” to “citizen”.

Formerly the crisis was framed as an exogenous phenomenon (Olsson and Nord 2014); a “natural disaster” beyond the agency of “banks, financial markets, speculators, politicians and governments” (Bickes et al. 2014, p. 435). This research shows that post-crisis, framings were of unethical behaviour, malpractice and out-of-control remuneration. This development can be mapped as beginning with an apparently blameless Northern Rock, concluding with the incredulity expressed at seemingly limitless remuneration. The crisis, therefore, has been rebranded as a moral tale, transcending the usual norms of EBF reporting (Kelsey 2014). Stories of personal and institutional conflict, of behaviour deemed ethically, morally or legally dubious (see also Thomas 2016) and the impact on ordinary citizens are all indicative of this redefinition of EBF journalism.

Ahead of the specific analysis of the key PIE issues, qualitative evidence confirms that executive pay has been subjected to intensified scrutiny (see also Davis 2015). However, critical realism seeks to find explanations within wider structures and circumstances, and accordingly, little has changed in terms of the ways that EBF journalism probes and interrogates the wider model of capitalism. The consequence is a not-so-new landscape where even though some have behaved immorally, the banking system is not seen to be in need of fundamental change (Kelsey et al. 2016), the focus remaining on misbehaving individuals rather than the system within which they operate (Butterick 2015).

Elites always appear to defend and promote their own interests (Piketty 2014). The marginalisation of traditional Keynesianism both in terms of practice and pedagogically dates back to the mid 1980’s (Farrell and Quiggin 2012). In the U.K, this can be mapped to Thatcherism and the emphasis on market-driven growth (Murdock 2015). The narrative developed in Chapter 6 can be summarised thus:

- **News reports are impactful, and can be intensified by the strategic use of particular language, words and images.**
- **Post crisis, EBF issues are increasingly humanised, with more emphasis on personal behaviour.**

- Newsworthy elements - measured in terms of news values - are more obviously evident, particularly in terms of conflict, and the challenging of elite characters.
- Simplified coverage indicates that while EBF news might be generally classified as hard, the coverage of this news itself might be soft.
- The banking sector predominates business coverage on ITV1 and BBC1 10pm news bulletins in 2007 and 2014.
- BBC1 often take a more conservative and deferential approach to organisations and those working for them, while ITV1 are often more combative.
- Growth is presented as both the overall economic aim and the panacea for any economic problems.
- Despite being obliged, to varying extents, to act in the public interest, neither channel seriously challenges the prevailing neoliberal economic model, and neither describes or discusses ways in which capitalism might better serve the public.

## **Chapter 7. PIE in the news: a poor show, or a wealth of coverage?**

Chapter 6 described, in qualitative terms, the landscape of EBF reporting on TV news, where coverage often has a considerable impact through language and imagery, and where the banking sector predominates. Coverage has become humanised, the emphasis changing from statistical data to an increased focus on people and their failings. Often, there are discernible differences between channels, with ITV1 developing a more combative approach to reporting corporations and their affairs, seemingly at odds with traditional understandings of the relationships between commercial media and their advertisers. Often however, coverage on both channels is characterised by increasing homogeneity. Finally, the economic model of neoliberalism is unchallenged by both BBC1 and ITV1.

As it moves from the generality of EBF news to the specific nature of PIE reporting, Chapter 7 tightly focuses on the quantification of the characteristics, themes and trends evident in PIE issue reports. This data emerging from Level 2 Content Analysis identifies typical blueprints and pertinent examples, which are then more deeply examined using qualitative analysis in Chapter 8. On the basis of findings so far, it seems likely that discourses concerning extreme financial conditions (poverty and wealth), those with affected lifestyles (the squeezed middle) and the gap between them (income inequality) may not contain critiques of the system creating such outcomes. Real world data shows that all these PIE issues are increasing problematic. For example:

- **POVERTY** - Around 20% of the UK's population live in poverty (MacInnes et al. 2013; Milmo 2014; Oxfam 2015).
- **The SQUEEZED MIDDLE** - Average weekly wages in the UK have fallen, in real terms, since 2009, and are some way from returning to those levels (Corlett and Gardiner 2015).
- **WEALTH** - Between period 1979-2012, top executive salaries increased far faster than average pay and inflation (Atkinson 1997; Finch 2007; Topham 2013) and in

2016, there is evidence showing that these increases were continuing without restraint (Mongahan 2016).

- **INCOME INEQUALITY** - income inequality in the U.K has been “well above the OECD average in the last three decades” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2015, p.1), and the nation is now “the most economically unequal state within Europe” (Dorling 2016).

As previously explained, and consistent with other analysis of income inequality coverage (McCall 2013), PIE issues were often found in stories about a wide range of topics, some qualifying as EBF, but also in stories beyond that description. As before, only the dominant category was coded, and the units of measurement are the news items containing references to PIE issues<sup>1</sup>.

### **7.1 Preparedness of news channels to report PIE, and levels of embeddedness.**

As a first step, this analysis considers the conventions and stories carrying PIE issues. Accordingly, Table 7.1 shows which types of news conventions most often carried references to PIE issues in 2007 and 2014:

**Table 7.1 Overview of all PIE news items (by percentage).**

	<b>2007</b>		<b>2014</b>	
	<b>BBC1</b>	<b>ITV1</b>	<b>BBC1</b>	<b>ITV1</b>
<b>n = number of stories</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Edited Packages</b>	83.6	82.0	83.5	79.5
<b>Live 2-ways</b>	7.3	4.0	7.5	9.4
<b>Live 2-way including edited package</b>	6.4	10.0	2.2	6.8
<b>Anchor</b>	2.7	4.0	6.8	4.3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.1 shows that collectively, PIE issues were more reported in 2014, with ITV1’s shift to more serious news perhaps accounting for the considerable increase in such

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<sup>1</sup> The tables in this chapter contain as much detail as possible. Where certain categories contain very few observations which are not significant within the chapter’s narrative, these are often grouped as “others”.

reporting on the channel. The dominant news convention carrying PIE issues across both years and channels were edited packages, consistent with TV news in general (Cushion and Thomas 2013; Cushion et al. 2015). Within these packages, reporters provide commentary alongside visual images and on-screen sources, but are not reporting “live” (Cushion et al. 2015). Such packages are generally scripted, are less interpretive, and use a wider range and greater number of social actor sources in an attempt to achieve “balanced” reporting (Cushion and Thomas 2013; Cushion et al. 2015). Traditionally, these packages supply background and context, while live news in contrast, is more interpretive, and assists in providing up-to-date or breaking news (Robinson 2012; Cushion and Thomas 2013).

PIE issues are not noted for “breaking news” characteristics, since generally they are not suddenly occurring; the squeezed middle and income inequality for example, can both be considered as developing and background phenomena. Accordingly, edited packages, which offer the opportunity for context and deeper investigation are the obvious and most natural home for such issues. In sum, serious, balanced discussions about PIE issues are most likely to occur during longer, more considered news conventions and logically, it is here, without the breathless urgency of live coverage, that these issues would be reported in cerebral, purposeful and impactful ways. While Table 7.1 indicated that PIE stories are located within the most potentially useful convention, Table 7.2 shows within which *types* of news story PIE issues were found:

**Table 7.2 The location of PIE issues (by percentage).**

	<b>2007</b>		<b>2014</b>	
	<b>BBC1</b>	<b>ITV1</b>	<b>BBC1</b>	<b>ITV1</b>
<b>n = number of stories</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Economy, Business</b>	23.6	20.0	48.1	45.3
<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	29.0	38.0	12.0	12.0
<b>Politics (process, policy, scandal, people)</b>	10.0	4.0	14.3	12.0
<b>Sport</b>	3.6	6.0	7.5	6.0
<b>War / Conflict / Terror</b>	4.6	4.0	6.8	5.1
<b>Immigration</b>	6.4	2.0		4.3
<b>Crime</b>	3.6	8.0		
<b>Home Affairs</b>	9.1	2.0		
<b>Health / Medical / Disease / Research</b>			0.8	4.3
<b>Others</b>	10.1	16.0	10.5	11.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.2 demonstrates that PIE issues are found in what are commonly recognised as hard news categories such as *Politics* and *Foreign Affairs*. This further indicates that it is unlikely that these issues will be treated with levity. In sum, though not often deserving of coverage in their own right, PIE issues are located within the stories and conventions providing the greatest potential opportunities for serious discussion.

Finally, as has been explained, TV news stories can be expressed more generally (thematically) or in more specific, individualised (episodic) ways. Figure 7.1 describes whether PIE reports were expressed episodically or thematically, and whether there were discernible differences between the two. Figure 7.1 shows that items could not always be emphatically assigned, since they could contain a mixture of approaches. Where there was no discernible difference, items were coded as “roughly equal”.

**Figure 7.1 Framing of PIE news items (by percentage).**

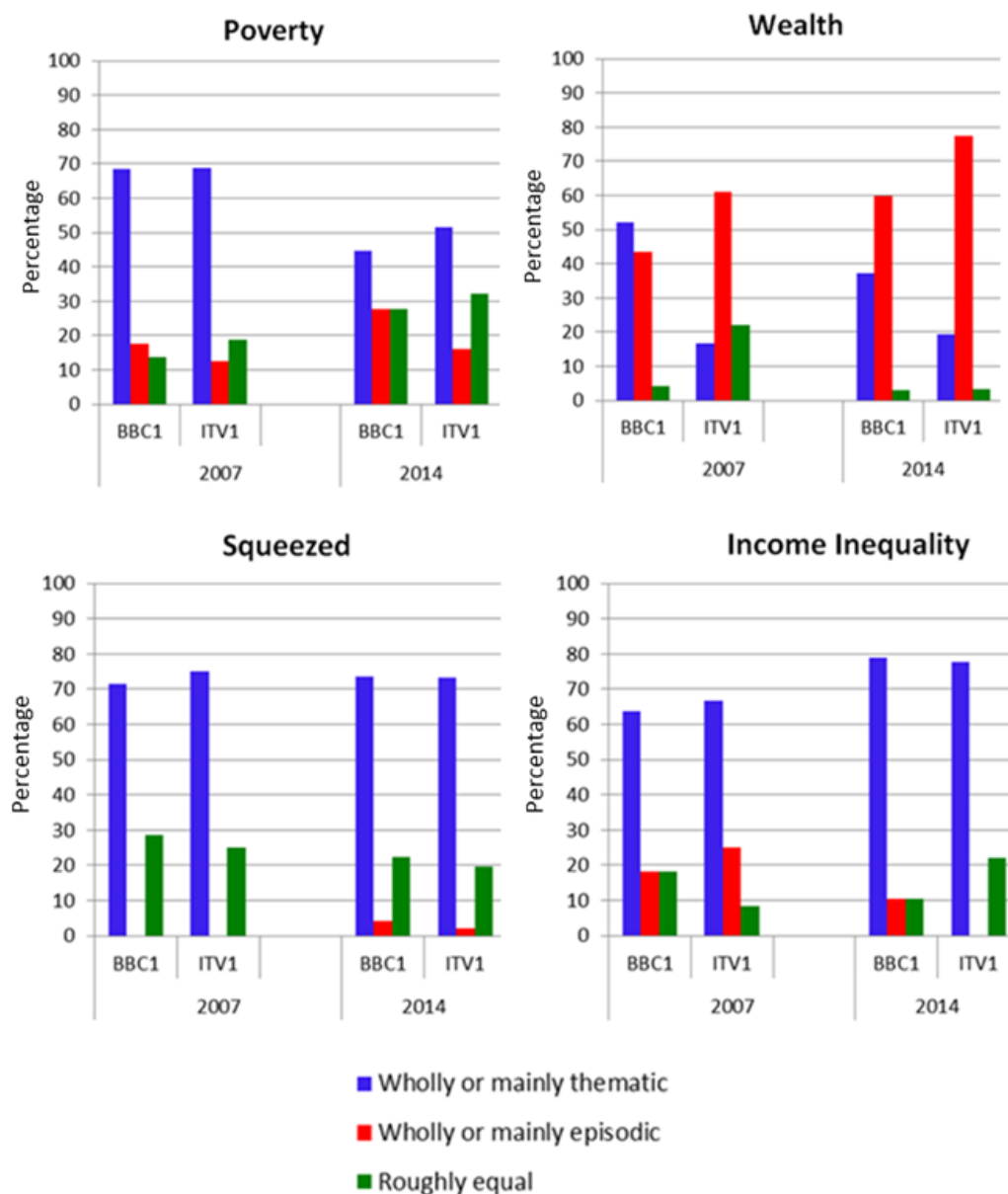


Figure 7.1 demonstrates that once again, there is a considerable degree of similarity between channels. It is clear across both years and channels, apart from the issue of wealth, that all of the PIE issues are generally reported thematically. Coverage of poverty is slightly less clear cut across years and channels, suggesting that although thematic treatment predominates, episodic coverage and a mixture of both framings are also evident - especially in 2014. The squeezed middle and income inequality are both presented almost entirely thematically. The change in poverty coverage towards a more episodic approach - albeit marginal - resonates with the advocacy that episodic coverage is more effective in disseminating the plight of the poor (Castell and Thompson 2007; Robinson et al. 2009).



However, while evidence shows that thematic framings deal with weighty issues within a wider, societal context, episodic framings often reduce serious issues to anecdotal and superficial presentations lacking a cohesive and organised explanation (Iyengar 1991; De Vreese 2003; Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2012). Ahead of specific analysis of content therefore, it can be concluded that in general, PIE issues are presented using the conventions and stories most conducive for serious coverage that provides context, causality and effect.

## **7.2 PIE coverage: volume, prominence, geography and themes.**

Moving to the substantive content of the news reports, Figure 7.2 demonstrates how each of the 410 individual PIE news items were distributed in terms of percentage, across the subheadings *Poverty*, *Wealth*, *Income Inequality* and the *Squeezed Middle*.

**Figure 7.2 Total distribution of PIE stories (by percentage).**

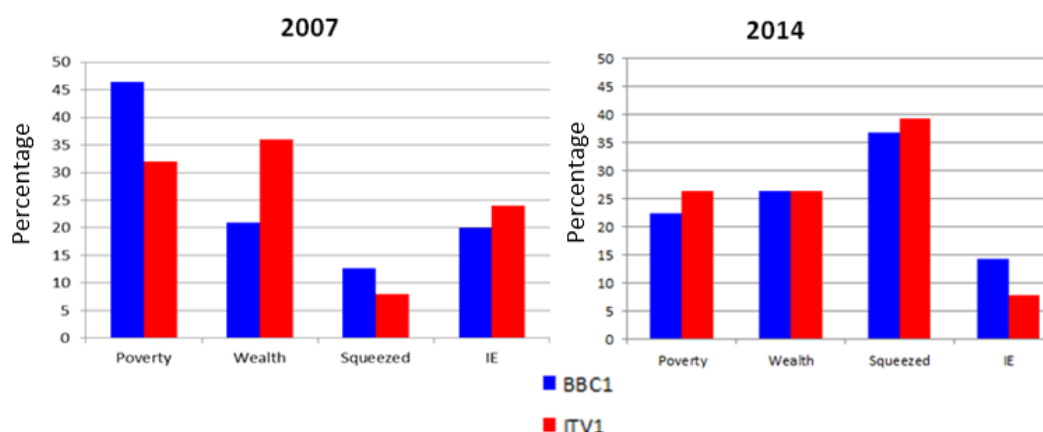


Figure 7.2 clearly demonstrates that despite increasing social concerns about poverty and income inequality (described in Chapter 3), these issues featured less in 2014 than they did in 2007. While in 2007, poverty is featured notably more on BBC1, and wealth more on ITV1, in 2014, the inter-channel homogeneity reappears. Emphasis on the squeezed middle however, notably increased on both channels in 2014. Pragmatically, news audiences include millions of ordinary citizens who, mid and post crisis, have found their living standards and discretionary incomes squeezed. Once again therefore, popular news values prevail as a news selection mechanism.

Figure 7.3 shows the prominence of PIE issues within the stories carrying them. This indicates whether PIE issues are central, or whether they are just mentioned in

passing. Figure 7.3 shows the percentage of stories where references to, or discussions about, a PIE issue were a substantial element within the item carrying it.

**Figure 7.3 Percentage of news items where PIE issues were substantive.**

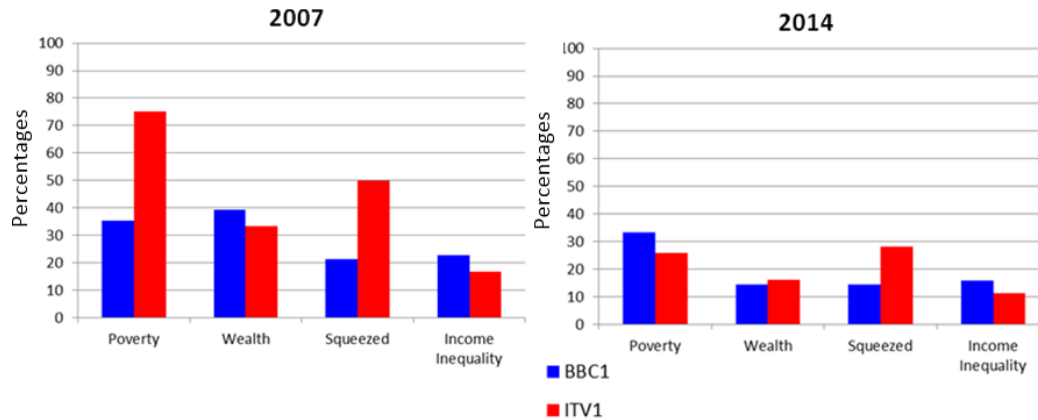


Figure 7.3 demonstrates that in 2007, in those stories containing references to poverty, the issue was presented with greater emphasis and prominence more often on ITV1 than it was on BBC1. The prominence of poverty on ITV1 is explained by their intensive coverage of Zimbabwe, with several bulletins actually presented from the South Africa/ Zimbabwean border, focusing on the plight of ordinary people as the country's economy imploded. By 2014 however, this story had lost its intensity. In those stories containing references to the squeezed middle, the issue was presented with greater emphasis and prominence on ITV1 in 2014. Notwithstanding these relatively small variances between channels, Figure 7.3 shows that in general, PIE issues were less emphasised as substantive in 2014 than they were in 2007.

In interim conclusion, across years and channels, PIE news is located within hard news stories and edited packages, encouraging these issues to be dealt with in a cerebral, contextual way. Proper discussions about these important social issues therefore, are, at first glance, given every opportunity to develop. Emphasis has shifted to the squeezed middle, and reductions in the reporting of poverty and income inequality in 2014 (see Figure 7.2) indicate that these issues are less important within news agendas than they were in 2007. Moreover, PIE topics are also generally less prominent in the news items carrying them (see Figure 7.3), suggesting that the sharp news focus is elsewhere, and that these human conditions are background topics. Notably, therefore, despite contemporary framings of income

inequality as a global risk (World Economic Forum 2014; 2015), its coverage has decreased both in terms of volume and prominence. Figure 7.4 shows the geographical locations associated with PIE stories across channels and years.

**Figure 7.4 Geographic locations of PIE stories (by percentage).**

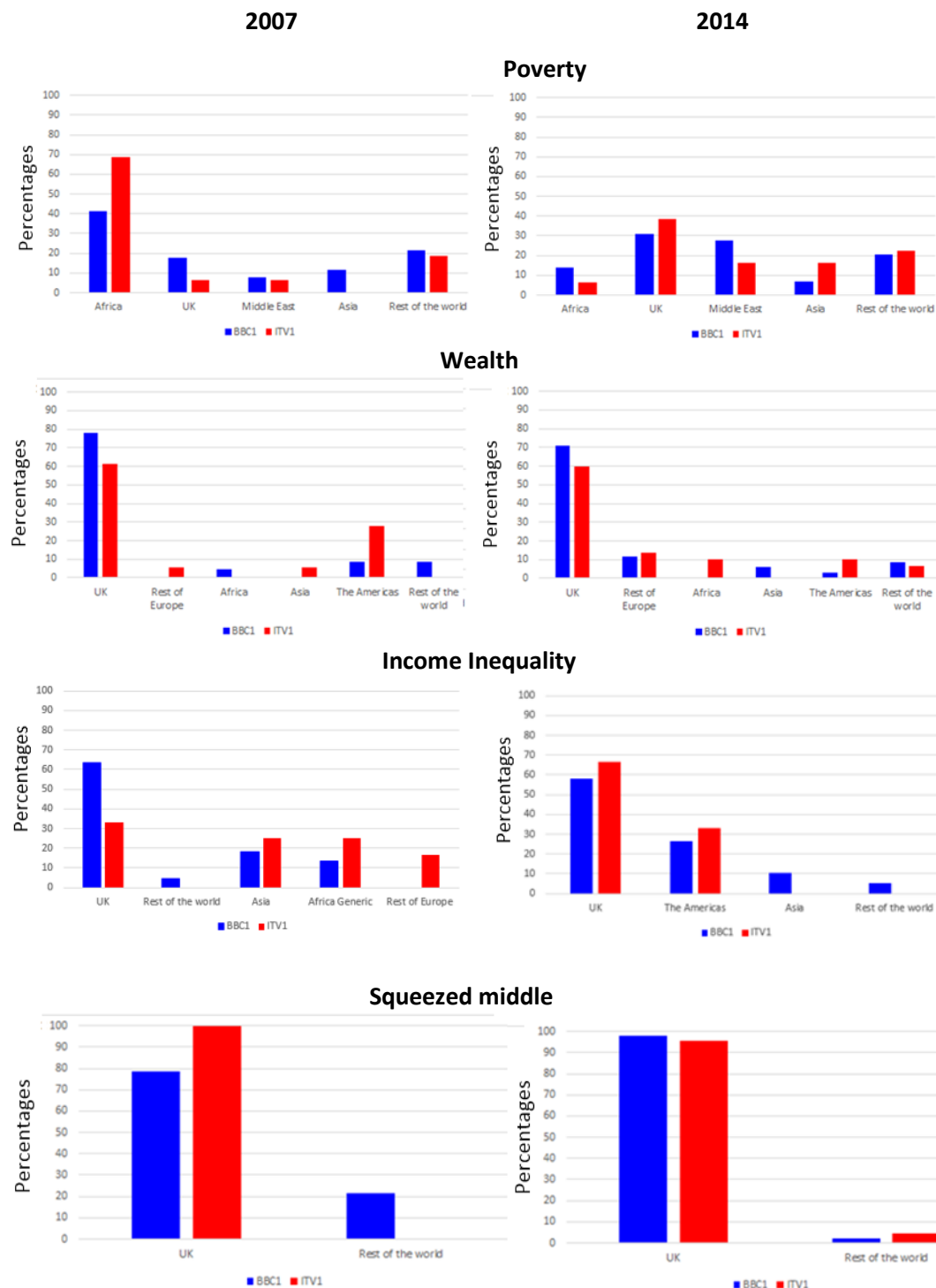


Figure 7.4 once again demonstrates inter-channel homogeneity. In 2007, poverty was largely expressed through an African prism, but in 2014, attention was more globally spread, with the emphasis shifting towards the U.K in particular. Of course, U.K events were not as extreme as say, African poverty, but had a greater resonance for local viewers. The focus on the U.K was further intensified by the increase in episodic framings (see Figure 7.1), as poverty is shown to be a condition to impact people, rather than a broad socio-economic issue. Across years and channels, wealth, income inequality and the squeezed middle were generally U.K-based. This analysis now moves to examining the themes within PIE stories, and Table 7.3 demonstrates the subthemes in stories containing references to poverty:

**Table 7.3 Breakdown of poverty stories (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of stories about poverty</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
Criminality / slavery	11.8	12.5	23.3	32.2
Prevailing poverty levels	13.7	6.3	26.7	29.0
War/conflict / terror	19.6	12.5	20.0	19.4
Controversial / cruel regimes	25.5	43.7		
Immigration	15.7	6.3	13.3	9.7
Political / economic elements	2.0	6.3	16.7	9.7
Efforts / initiatives to address poverty	3.9	12.5		
Individuals and their circumstances	7.8			
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.3 demonstrates that in 2007, both channels focused on cruel and controversial political regimes, which usually resulted in miserable living conditions for ordinary citizens. This is chiefly explained by an emphasis on Robert Mugabe's actions, and his policies in Zimbabwe; events reached a nadir in 2007 but generally disappeared from news agendas by 2014.

The focus on associations with war and conflict was repeated in 2014, alongside a greater spotlight on criminality and descriptions of prevailing poverty. *Description of*

*poverty* stories included reports on increasing poverty levels, how people are increasingly reliant on food banks, church leaders criticising welfare reform, and so on. Criminality stories include “modern day slavery” and how traffickers exploit the poor and vulnerable. Another notable change is that in contrast with 2007, in 2014 there were no stories describing any potential solutions to poverty, and the emphasis instead was on the simple description of the issue rather than the prescribing of any policy options. Across channels and years, wealth remains predominately a U.K.-based issue, and Table 7.4 shows subthemes in stories containing references to it:

**Table 7.4 Breakdown of wealth stories (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of stories about wealth</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>
Particular individuals / groups receiving high pay	17.4	11.1	40.0	41.9
The misdeeds / excesses of particular people or organisations	17.4	33.5	20.0	29.0
The prosperity / problems of particular organisations	17.4	22.2	17.1	16.1
How legislation / regulation / political events might impact the wealthy / highly paid	21.7	11.1	17.2	3.2
Wealthy lifestyles	13.0		5.8	9.8
Lottery winners or other examples of good fortune	8.7	11.1		
Others	4.4			
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.4 shows that in 2014, both channels polarised their coverage towards stories about high pay and the controversy associated with it, indicative that news has adopted a new emphasis towards human stories about what people earn, and whether such sums are justified. As an aside, wealth stories often feature stories about the pay of sporting celebrities; the focus on elite characters (reinforced by the earlier finding that wealth was highly episodic) indicates that wealth contains many news values that editors find attractive. The misdeeds and excesses of the wealthy are also evident within coverage across years and channels, albeit the sample is relatively small and the themes are varied. Income inequality (when it featured) was largely a U.K.-based issue, and Table 7.5 shows the subthemes in stories containing references to it:

**Table 7.5 Breakdown of income inequality stories (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of stories about income inequality</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>
Prevailing economic and political conditions	27.3	58.3	47.4	66.7
Budgets / legislation / politics	27.3	16.7	42.0	22.2
Specific industrial / public sectors	27.3	8.3	5.3	
Geographical, gender or class divides	13.6		5.3	11.1
Other	4.5	16.7		
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.5 indicates that within a small sample, discussions about prevailing economic and political circumstances dominate, alongside budgets and wider legislation. These are notable because of their generic nature, and are characterised by long reports covering a wide range of economic elements (see section 6.2). Table 7.6 shows the subthemes in stories containing references to the squeezed middle:

**Table 7.6 Breakdown of squeezed middle stories (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of stories about the squeezed middle</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>46</b>
Mortgages, debt and borrowing	50.0	75.0	18.5	23.9
Pay	7.1	25.0	26.5	21.9
The economy			22.4	23.9
Other bills and outgoings	14.4		10.2	10.9
Pensions and benefits	21.4		6.1	6.5
Jobs and employment			8.2	6.5
Political elements and implications			6.1	2.2
Financial and commercial markets	7.1		2.0	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

As has been already established, coverage of the squeezed middle has increased considerably, and remains almost entirely and exclusively a U.K-based issue (see

Figures 7.2 and 7.4). Once again, the news value of resonance, and the sensitivities and concerns of U.K citizens seem to drive coverage. In 2014, the emphasis extends to stories about debt and borrowing (relating to mortgages in particular), the cost of living more generally, and broader discussions about the economy. These are all more specific than in the case of income inequality, and resonate with the causes of the squeezed middle identified in Chapter 3. It is to expressions of causation that the analysis now turns.

### **7.3 PIE issues: Causes.**

During the analysis of the reports, any expression of causation was recorded in terms of what it referred to, and who was referring to it. Figure 7.5 shows how often PIE concepts were explained in terms of what might cause them.

**Figure 7.5 The frequency of causal explanations in all PIE stories.**

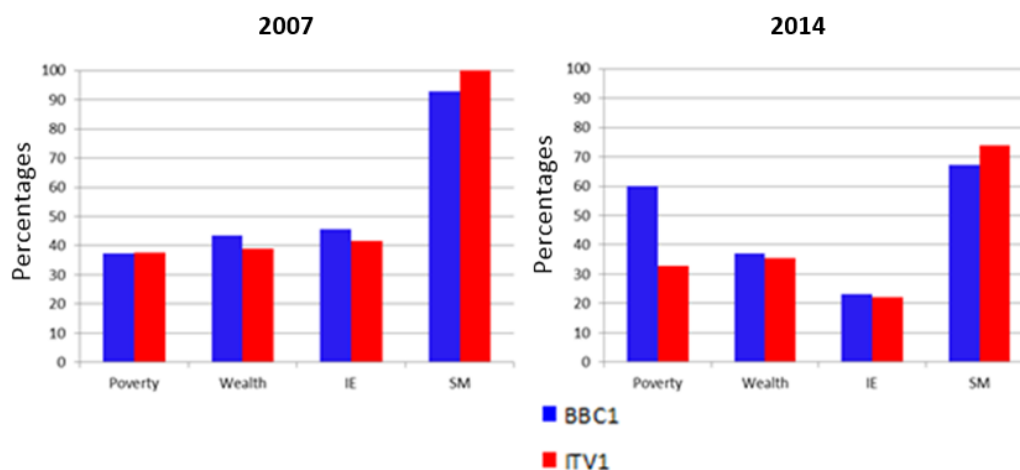


Figure 7.5 demonstrates once again, since in most cases the red and blue columns are nearly identical, that there is an uncannily high degree of similarity between channels. In 2007, poverty, wealth and income inequality are explained in terms of causality in 30% to 40% of cases. In 2007 however, the few squeezed middle observations were almost always assigned some specific causal explanation. In the more meaningful 2014 sample, squeezed middle causality decreased, but causality was nonetheless more prominent than for any other PIE category. This could be interpreted as the result of a perceived need to define the more nebulous nature of the squeezed middle, and that channels offered more reasons for the financial predicament of many of those watching. With the exception of BBC1's poverty reporting in 2014, ITV1 holds at least an equitable position in terms of causal

explanations. Notably, income inequality can not only be said to be covered less in 2014, but that it was also explained less in terms of its causes. This is discussed in more detail in Chapters 8 and 9, but this analysis now moves to the more detailed examination of causes, when they are given. Table 7.7 focuses on the quoted causes of poverty in more detail:

**Table 7.7 Expressed causes of poverty.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total number of stories about poverty</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Percentage of poverty stories where causality is attributed by any social actor</b>	<b>37.3</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>
<b>Total incidents of causes (more than one often given by a single social actor)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>
War / migration / failure of crops / disease / lack of aid	25.0	30.0	33.6	35.0
Government policies including benefit cuts	21.8	30.0	7.4	25.0
Prices / rents / interest rates / inflation / other increases	12.5	40.0	14.8	
Low wages / seasonal or no work	9.4		18.5	15.0
Overspending / risk taking / borrowing / addiction	18.8			
Actions by commercial organisations (lending, Offshoring etc.)	12.5			
Rich exploiting the poor / enforcing slavery / criminality			3.7	15.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.7 shows that across both years and channels, poverty is attributed to factors such as war, crop failure, government policies, increasing prices, lack of work and victimhood, which can all be interpreted as causes beyond personal agency. Notably, these are also state-based or structural issues (as defined in Chapter 3); the inability of markets and commercial organisations to provide minimum living standards for example, is not presented as a cause of poverty. Table 7.8 shows the breakdown of causes in stories about wealth:



**Table 7.8 Expressed causes of wealth.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of stories about wealth</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Percentage of wealth stories where causality is attributed by any social actor</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>38.9</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>35.4</b>
<b>Total incidents of causes (social actors often express more than one)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>
Economic / political stability / government or EU policies	72.7	14.3	12.5	
High salaries / bonus payments	9.1	14.3	37.5	58.3
Criminality		42.9	18.8	25.0
Entrepreneurship and endeavour		14.3	18.8	16.7
Globalisation / migration	9.1		12.5	
Good fortune	9.1	14.3		
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Samples sizes are small, but what can be gleaned from Table 7.8 is that in 2014, the news focus was on high salaries and bonuses, alongside criminality. This is consistent with the trend of humanisation within EBF news, where stories about individual wealth are enhanced by the more salacious details of gain through nefarious activities.

Causes of income inequality were rare, with a total of only 25 instances across years and channels. There is no clear pattern emerging, and conclusions are not possible. Causes associated with the squeezed middle were considerable however, and are shown in Table 7.9:

**Table 7.9 Expressed causes of the squeezed middle.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of stories about the squeezed middle</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Percentage of squeezed middle stories where causality is attributed by any social actor</b>	<b>92.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>67.3</b>	<b>73.9</b>
<b>Total incidents of causes (more than one often given by a single social actor)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>52</b>
Prices / rents / interest rates / inflation / others increasing	47.4	83.3	54.4	57.7
Low wages / below inflation wages / seasonal or no work	15.8		33.3	26.9
Pensions / savings failures / benefit cuts or delays	15.8		5.3	13.5
Markets collapsing / falling demand	5.3		3.5	
Other government policies		16.7		1.9
Poor lending practices	15.8		1.8	
War / migration / failure of crops / disease			1.8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

As well as showing some striking similarities between channels in 2014, Table 7.9 demonstrates that squeezed middle causality is clearly attributed to a combination of increasing prices and low or frozen wages. Once again, these are factors outside the control of those affected; they might also be interpreted as the consequences of market forces. Moreover, the context of such causes can be also described as localised and narrow. The absence of any wider context is notable, as is any connection to global events and markets. A key emerging narrative is that reporting is superficial and cursory, and the generative mechanisms to explain this are discussed in Chapter 9.

Table 7.10 shows a summary of the social actor types who are seen to express an opinion about what causes any of the PIE issues detailed in Tables 7.7-7.9.

**Table 7.10 Social actors expressing causality across PIE issues.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total number of social actors expressing causality across all PIE stories (actors often give more than one cause)</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>84</b>
Journalists	75.0	88.0	50.5	59.5
Citizens	6.3	8.0	26.7	22.6
Politicians	3.1		8.0	6.0
Business people (including financial sector)	3.1	4.0	2.0	3.6
Religious leaders			2.0	6.0
Campaigners and charities	6.3		1.0	
Academics, economists, legal, think tanks	3.1		4.0	
Government departments, NGOs and public sector (including Bank of England, medical and military)	1.6		3.0	1.2
Trade unionist	1.6		3.0	
Celebrity				1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.10 emphatically demonstrates that unsurprisingly, it was journalists who most often expressed causality in 2007. In 2014 however, journalists still dominated, but citizens were increasingly prominent in describing causal explanations.

The theory of mediatisation claims that media take a central position within the “social process” (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999, p.211). Rather than allowing other social actors to determine news narratives, journalists increasingly interpret the words and opinions of others (Semetko et al. 1991; Cushion and Thomas 2013; Cushion 2015). If this is extended beyond political realms (Lundby 2009), then certainly in poverty stories, mediatisation can be refined, since BBC1 and ITV1 not only use journalists to build narratives, but also use citizens to assist them. This is on the basis, perhaps, that real people discussing poverty adds realism and credibility, and that descriptions of what it is like to be poor contain numerous news values. The prominence of citizens appears to represent another shift in EBF reporting, since traditional scholarship suggests citizen voices are marginalised versus elite actors (see, inter alia, Arrese and Vara 2015; Herkman and Harjuniemi 2015; Picard and Salgado 2015; Puustinen et al. 2015). Notably, academic, medical and legal experts are almost totally absent from both channels in both years, especially economic

experts, consistent with U.S findings (Harrington 2016). Furthermore, the increasing reliance on the public to develop PIE narratives means that experts and evidence are more likely to be marginalised in favour of personal anecdote<sup>2</sup>.

There were only 13 political actors quoting any PIE causation in 2014; over 50% represented Labour, with the rest spread among the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP. Since Labour were the main opposition and are traditionally allied to the working class, it is unsurprising that they might be keener to discuss poverty, inequality and excessive wealth. Notably, “fringe” parties were absent, and trade unionists in particular were almost wholly absent; of the 274 social actors seen and heard quoting causation, only 3 represented trade unions. This is consistent with research finding that trade unionists are no longer featured within news (Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2013). It is difficult to imagine trade unionists refusing to contribute to news stories about executive remuneration for example, and so perhaps their absence can reasonably be attributed to editorial decision-making.

#### **7.4 PIE issues: Consequences.**

Having considered expressions of causation, this analysis now moves to expressions of PIE issue consequences. Table 7.11 shows the breakdown of consequences associated with poverty:

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<sup>2</sup> The diminished value of expert evidence was a strong subtheme within discussions about the vote by British citizens to leave the European Union in June, 2016. Indeed, the advertising material ahead of an event at The University of Warwick in November 2016 suggests that “this year’s Brexit campaign and its aftermath saw the value of expertise reduced to an all-time low” since despite pollsters predicting a vote for remain, and academics “almost universally” warning against a vote to leave, “experts were ignored, discredited and rendered ineffective” (University of Warwick 2016).

**Table 7.11 Expressed consequences of poverty.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of poverty stories</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Percentage of poverty stories where consequences are mentioned by any social actor</b>	<b>68.6</b>	<b>68.8</b>	<b>70.0</b>	<b>77.4</b>
<b>Total incidents of consequences (more than one often given by a single social actor)</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>52</b>
Hunger	21.0	40.7	23.3	28.8
Forced into slavery / bonded labour / prostitution / begging / sell body parts / forced sterilisation / attempted suicide	21.0	11.1	15.0	11.5
Poor living conditions / sanitation / squalor / overcrowding	9.9	18.5	18.3	13.5
Disease and ill health	8.6	3.7	11.7	15.4
Migration	17.3	11.1	5.0	3.8
Financial hardship / debt / bankruptcy / must deal with inflated prices	9.9		13.3	13.5
Other	12.3	14.8	13.3	13.4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.11 indicates that whereas in 2007 consequences of poverty were varied, by 2014, these had polarised into repercussions of desperation and extreme forms of discomfort. Crime, disease and poor living conditions not only contain many news value elements, they also represent straightforward narratives for journalists to describe. As has been determined by the overall nature of poverty stories, discourses concerning wider societal consequences are not evident, apart from a small showing that populations are forced to migrate because of poverty in their countries of origin. Table 7.12 shows the breakdown of the expressed consequences of wealth:

**Table 7.12 Expressed consequences of wealth.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of wealth stories</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Percentage of wealth stories where consequences are mentioned by any social actor</b>	<b>65.2</b>	<b>72.2</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>38.7</b>
<b>Total incidents of consequences (more than one often given by a single social actor)</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>
Glamorous lifestyles / expensive homes and possessions and projects	42.3	57.9	81.8	60.0
Brings security / prosperity / happiness / influence	19.2	15.8		13.3
Anger / protest / instability		5.3	18.2	20.0
Bad / criminal behaviour	7.7	15.8		
Divorce is costly / does not bring quality of life	15.4	5.3		
Facilitates philanthropy / good causes	11.5			
Brings benefits to the markets / economy	3.8			6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.12 indicates that the consequences of wealth are expressed in terms of glamorous lifestyles, and more specifically, opportunities for high value acquisitions such as cars and homes. Table 7.13 shows the breakdown of consequences associated with the squeezed middle:

**Table 7.13 Expressed consequences of squeezed middle.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of squeezed middle stories</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Percentage of squeezed middle stories where consequences are mentioned by any social actor</b>	<b>71.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>58.7</b>
<b>Total incidents of consequences (more than one often given by a single social actor)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>
Economic hardship / repossessions	63.2	62.5	63.6	74.4
People taking extra work or borrowing more	5.3	25.0	4.5	
Protest / anger / strike	5.3		18.2	9.3
Disease / ill health	15.8			
Others	10.5	12.5	13.7	16.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.13 demonstrates that squeezed middle consequences can be wholly summarised as personal, where discomfort and hardship are experienced by ordinary people in the form of restricted lifestyles and financial worries. Again, EBF news has become humanised, with stories about people becoming more compelling. Table 7.14 demonstrates how consequences are expressed in stories about income inequality:

**Table 7.14 Expressed consequences of income inequality.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of income inequality stories</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Percentage of income inequality stories where consequences are mentioned by any social actor</b>	<b>63.6</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>33.3</b>
<b>Total incidents of consequences (more than one often given by a single social actor)</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
Protest / anger / strike / instability	6.5	33.3	70.0	50.0
Physical discomforts such as hunger, poor housing, squalid conditions	38.7	50.0		
Differentials in opportunity	22.6	8.3	10.0	
Disease / ill health	3.2			25.0
Less economic stability / dysfunctional society				25.0
Loss of work	6.5	8.3	10.0	
Glamorous lifestyles	6.5		10.0	
Economic hardship / reposessions / dependence on aid / benefits	12.9			
Misdeeds of the rich	3.2			
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.14 indicates, consistent with a general reduction in coverage of income inequality, that there are fewer expressions of consequence in 2014 than in 2007. It appears that the main consequences of income inequality have shifted from physical discomfort towards protest and unrest, but sample sizes are insufficient for any firm conclusions. Nonetheless, the social consequences of income inequality (see Chapter 3) are wholly absent, consistent with the argument that prevailing neoliberal economic models are not seriously challenged.

Table 7.15 shows which social actors were prominent when expressing causality:

**Table 7.15 Social actors expressing consequences across PIE issues.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of social actors expressing consequences across all PIE issues (actors often give more than one)</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>87</b>
Journalists	63.2	56.8	53.2	55.2
Citizens	21.7	24.3	28.7	23.0
Politicians	3.8	2.7	6.4	4.7
Business people (including financial sector)	2.8	5.4	4.2	3.4
Religious leaders	0.9	5.4	2.1	5.7
Campaigners and charities	2.8	2.7	1.1	1.1
Academic, legal, economists, think tanks	1.9		3.2	2.3
Government departments, NGOs and public sector (including Bank of England, medical and military)	1.9	2.7	1.1	1.1
Trade unionists			3.2	1.1
Celebrity				1.1
Criminal	0.9			
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.15 demonstrates once again, that there is a high degree of similarity across channels and years. Journalists, by some distance, are the most prominent social actors expressing PIE issue consequences. Once again however, the prominence of citizens supports notions that in PIE stories, journalists use the public to build narratives. In turn, within the humanisation of business news, the lived experiences and opinions of ordinary people appear to be more compelling for news editors than more official discourses. Again, trade unionists, who, it can be assumed, would usually describe the consequences of poverty and the squeezed middle most vociferously, are all but absent. There were few politicians expressing the consequences of PIE issues in 2007 but in the larger sample in 2014, those politicians who did feature primarily represented Labour, with Conservative politicians almost totally absent. Albeit the sample of politicians is small, results again reflect that those representing Labour - traditionally a party with working class values - are more in evidence than those representing any other parties. Figure 7.6 shows an overview of the frequency of causes and consequences prominence within all PIE stories:



**Figure 7.6 The frequency of causes and consequences within PIE stories.**

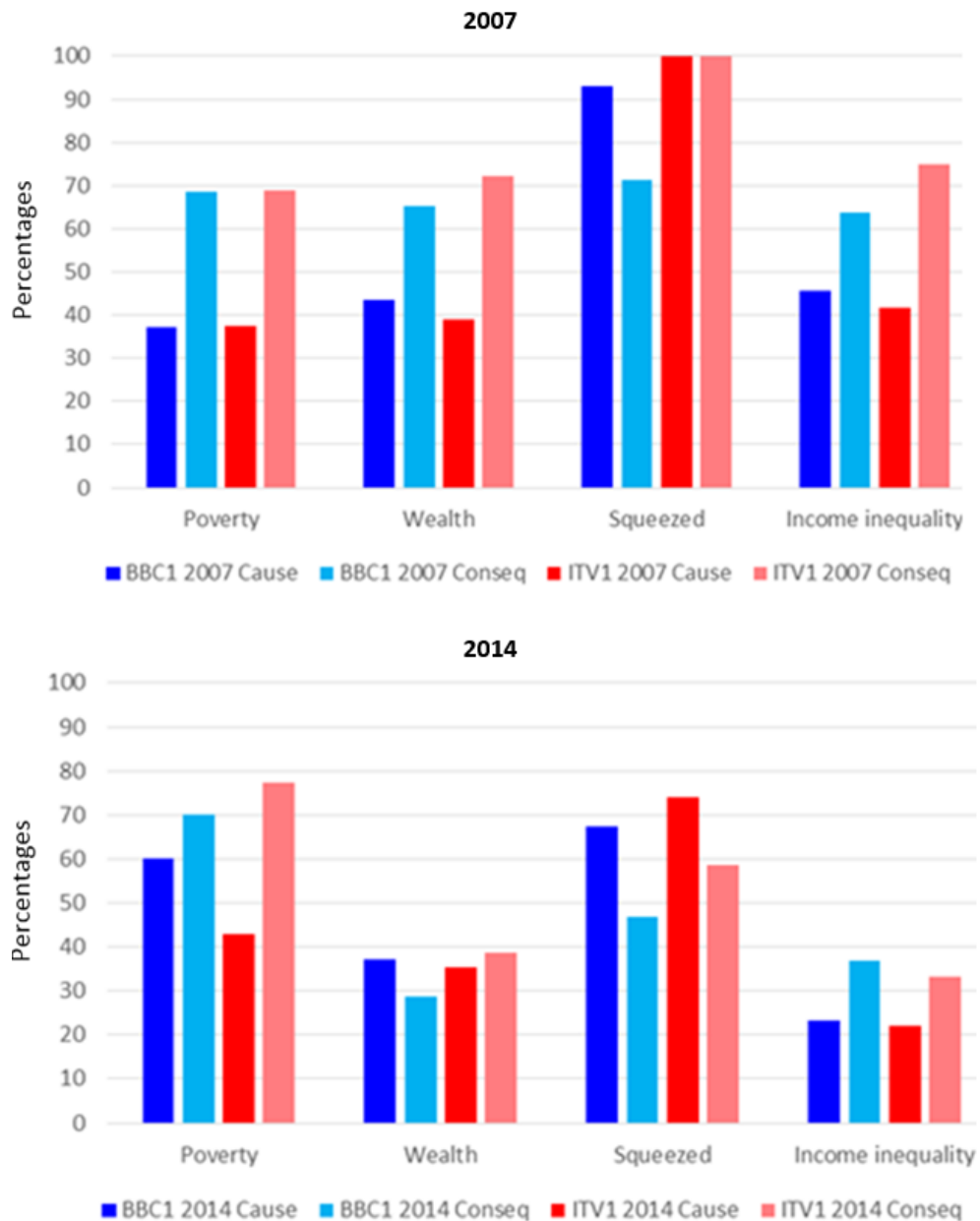


Figure 7.6 demonstrates that generally in 2007, there seems a greater willingness to report consequences than causes, apart from in the case of the squeezed middle. In 2014, the squeezed middle is articulated in terms of causality more often than in terms of consequence, perhaps because it had, by then, become accepted public discourse and more widely understood. Moreover, while most of the squeezed middle might understand the realities of hardship, they might also be interested in discovering the reasons why it was happening in the first place.

If journalism's function is to report, explain and give context, then this obligation appears to have declined, since in most cases, PIE reports generally include less cause and consequence in 2014 than in 2007. Analysis now moves to examining the attribution of blame within PIE stories.

### **7.5 PIE issues: Blame.**

While causation might be considered to be more systemic, blame, in contrast, is characterised as more specific, and more personal. Table 7.16 shows how often blame is attributed within PIE issues:

**Table 7.16 PIE stories attributing blame (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
Total number of stories about <b>Poverty</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
Percentage containing any assignment of blame	25.5	31.3	3.3	3.2
Total number of stories about <b>Wealth</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>
Percentage containing any assignment of blame				
Total number of stories about <b>Squeezed Middle</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>46</b>
Percentage containing any assignment of blame	14.2		4.1	4.3
Total number of stories about <b>Income inequality</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>
Percentage containing any assignment of blame	13.2	16.7		

Table 7.16 demonstrates that blame is only attributed by social actors sporadically and infrequently. While wealth is not generally a “problem” involving “blame”, income inequality and the squeezed middle are rarely blamed on any organisation, group or individual. The only substantial instances of blame relate to poverty in 2007, and Table 7.17 considers these in more detail:

**Table 7.17 The attribution of blame in poverty stories.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of poverty stories</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Percentage of poverty stories where blame is mentioned by any social actor</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>Total incidents of blame (more than one often given by a single social actor)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Government	33.3		100.0	
Particular political actor	46.7	100.0		
Unscrupulous business / lenders	13.3			100.0
Consumers being excessive	6.7			
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

While the number of observations is small, the analysis of blame in stories including references to poverty is notable, because in almost all cases (13 out of 15 on BBC1; 4 out of 4 on ITV1), blame is assigned by journalists themselves. This is unusual, since even aside from any requirements that TV journalists should be impartial, normative models of behaviour suggest that they should not show emotion when delivering the news (Montgomery 2007). In 2007, much of the dominant “particular political actor” category in Table 7.17 is accounted for by Robert Mugabe being held responsible for the deteriorating economic conditions in Zimbabwe. In other words, when someone is blamed, it is journalists who do the blaming, and it is governments and political actors who are blamed. Within democratic regimes, blame is more difficult to apportion, and perhaps for journalists, pointing the finger at distant political dictatorships is less problematic. Once again, there is no significant suggestion that any local or international economic system (capitalism) should be held responsible. The analysis now moves to the examination of those occasions when action is called for to solve/ease/ reduce PIE phenomena.

#### **7.6 PIE issues: Action.**

Action can be considered as the natural progression of cause, consequence and blame; where actions are identified and proposed, advocating remedial action is the obvious next step. Table 7.18 shows the incidence of such advocacy within stories containing PIE issues:

**Table 7.18 PIE stories including calls for action is called for (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
Total number of stories about <b>Poverty</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
Percentage containing any calls for action	13.7	43.8	13.3	16.1
Total number of stories about <b>Wealth</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>
Percentage containing any calls for action	26.1		14.3	22.6
Total number of stories about the <b>Squeezed Middle</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>46</b>
Percentage containing any calls for action			22.4	6.5
Total number of stories about <b>Income inequality</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>
Percentage containing any calls for action	9.1	16.7	47.4	33.3

Table 7.18 shows that action is called for only sporadically in 2007, but that by 2014, it has become more regular. Paradoxically, although income inequality is scarcely reported, when it *was* featured, stories often included social actors calling for remedial action. Generally, calls for action are unusual in 2014, apart from in the case of income inequality. PIE stories are grouped in Table 7.19, making analysis more meaningful:

**Table 7.19 Breakdown of actions called for within all PIE stories (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>n = total number of PIE stories</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Percentage of PIE stories where action is called for by any social actor</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>15.4</b>
<b>Total incidents of calls for action (more than one often given by a single social actor)</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>23</b>
Intervention by UK Government (should resign, aid, legislation, military etc.)	68.7	60.0	73.7	47.8
The “west” must help the “east”, or intentional governments must act (aid, sanctions etc.)	18.8	20.0	2.6	8.7
Private sector action (e.g. stop employing migrant workers)			10.5	34.8
Unspecified “help”	6.3	10.0	10.5	4.3
Consumer action (e.g. boycotting certain products, shareholder protest)	6.3	10.0	2.6	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.19 indicates that in both years, when action is called for, it is mainly directed at the U.K government. In 2007, any advocacy directed towards the private sector is completely absent, but in 2014 however, and resonant with their more adversarial approach towards corporations and commercial organisations in general, ITV1 feature a number of calls advocating private sector action. The majority of calls across years and channels are focused on stories emphasising human suffering and so on. Table 7.20 shows which social actors are most often seen to advocate action:

**Table 7.20 Social actors advocating action within PIE reporting (by percentage).**

	2007			2014	
	BBC1	ITV1		BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total number of social actors calling for actions (actors often give more than one)</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>23</b>
Politicians	43.8	50.0		52.6	47.8
Citizens	12.5	20.0		7.9	4.3
Campaigners and charities	18.8			5.3	17.4
Business (including financial sector)	6.3			15.8	17.4
Government departments, NGOs and public sector (including Bank of England, medical and military)	12.5			7.9	4.3
Religious leaders		20.0			4.3
Journalists		10.0		2.6	
Academics, economists, legal, think tanks				5.3	4.3
Celebrity	6.3				
Trade unions				2.6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>		<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Journalists do not habitually ascribe blame, and Table 7.20 demonstrates that they do not advocate remedial action. There were various social actors calling for action in 2007, but in 2014, such calls were mainly made by politicians and businesspeople. Overwhelmingly however, actions were called for by politicians, and by combining the findings from Tables 7.19 and 7.20, it can be concluded that actions are perceived to be within the remit of legislative bodies, and are advocated by elected politicians capable of influencing change. Market changes, and business actors calling for them are much less evident. Table 7.21 shows which political actors called for action regarding any of the PIE issues:

**Table 7.21 Affiliations of politicians advocating action (by percentage).**

	2007		2014
<b>Total politicians calling for action</b>	<b>14</b>		<b>37</b>
Conservatives	35.7		27.0
Labour	50.0		37.8
Liberal Democrats	7.1		24.3
Other / unknown	7.1		5.4
Green			2.7
UKIP			2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>		<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.21 indicates a small sample of political actors, particularly in 2007. However, in both years, Labour politicians were the most prominent.

### **7.7 PIE issues: Other discourses.**

Besides discourses that could be clearly categorised as cause, consequence, blame or action, there are other pertinent discourses which, in the context within which they are mentioned, do not fit within these categories but are notable nevertheless. Table 7.22 summarises these additional discourses:

**Table 7.22 Other poverty discourses (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total of other discourses about poverty featuring within poverty stories.</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>46</b>
Misery and distress, and how poverty forces extreme actions such as prostitution, migration etc.	44.0	40.6	45.2	30.4
Increasing poverty, and prevailing conditions associated with it	26.7	12.5	14.3	26.1
Greed or misbehaviour of the wealthy	14.7	28.1	21.4	17.4
Lack of agency on behalf of governments and how poverty is not being addressed	9.3	9.4	2.4	13.0
Poverty is being addressed by governments			9.5	10.9
Poverty is not being addressed by private sector			7.1	
Protest and revolt / suppression of protest	4.0	6.3		2.2
Neutral descriptive discourses / commentary describing poverty	1.3	3.1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.22 demonstrates that across years and channels, the other discourses associated with poverty generally involve descriptions of misery and the conditions surrounding it, embracing both economic and political elements. The misdeeds and greed of the wealthy are also evident across both channels and years. Table 7.23 analyses additional discourses associated with wealth:

**Table 7.23 Other wealth discourses (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total of other discourses about wealth featuring within wealth stories.</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>42</b>
Greed / misbehaviour / excess	32.4	66.7	50.8	59.5
Prevailing conditions associated with wealth and how the system generally encourages it	26.5	8.3	17.5	11.9
Intangible benefits of wealth (fame, influence, power etc.)	11.8	16.7	4.8	
Wealth is good for the economy / regulation will damage the economy push wealthy elsewhere			9.5	19.1
Negative aspects of wealth (additional tax burdens etc.)	14.7		7.9	2.3
Philanthropy	11.8		3.2	7.1
Endeavour brings wealth	2.9	8.3		
Wealth / high wages are necessary for staff retention or attraction or to properly reward performance			6.3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.23 indicates that across both channels and years, these additional discourses were generally uncomplimentary about those acquiring wealth, and the ways it is acquired. Discourses supportive of wealth, including how it benefits the economy and facilitates philanthropy were much less evident. Table 7.24 shows the other discourses associated with the squeezed middle:

**Table 7.24 Other squeezed middle discourses (by percentage).**

	2007			2014	
	BBC1	ITV1		BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total of other discourses about squeezed middle featuring within squeezed middle stories.</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>97</b>	<b>80</b>
Negativity and distress	22.2	28.6			
Comparing lifestyles / pay / gender / geographical situations	11.1	14.3		6.2	17.5
Suggestions that there is a recovery				26.8	17.5
Governments / central banks attempting to ease discomfort / austerity and how it is needed	22.2	14.3		2.1	5.0
Prevailing economic conditions	11.1	28.6			
No benefits being experienced despite alleged recovery / how pay is lagging behind inflation				19.6	20.0
Governments exacerbate discomfort	11.1	14.3			
The pain of austerity				10.3	10.0
Protest and revolt	22.2				
Pay is catching / has caught up with inflation				10.3	8.8
Greed, excess and misbehaviour				8.2	8.8
Others				16.5	12.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>		<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

From Table 7.24, little can be concluded about 2007 due to the small number of observations. In 2014 however, other discourses about the squeezed middle were generally concerned with discussions surrounding whether there is a financial recovery or not (total of 46.4% on BBC1, and 37.5% on ITV1). Notably, given that the view amongst many in mainstream economics is that austerity is not the appropriate economic strategy (see, inter alia, Jolly et al. 2012), there were relatedly few discourses criticising it.

Table 7.25 shows the other discourses associated with income inequality:



**Table 7.25 Other income inequality discourses (by percentage).**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total of other discourses about income inequality featuring within income inequality stories</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>16</b>
Greed, excess and misbehaviour	36.6	42.9	28.1	12.5
Income inequality is rising			37.5	31.3
Comparing lifestyles / pay / gender / geographical situations	9.8	9.5	12.5	31.3
Negativity and distress of poverty / inequality	14.6	9.5	9.4	12.5
The prevailing economic conditions	14.6	14.3	3.1	
Defending the wealthy	12.2	14.3		
Suggestions that there is a recovery				12.5
Protest	2.4	4.8	3.1	
Private sector is complicit in discomfort	7.3			
Labour would tax the wealthy, while Conservatives would help the wealthy			6.3	
Trade unions are helpful		4.8		
Governments / central banks attempting to ease inequality / not making it any worse	2.4			
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.25 reflects that income inequality has been consistently associated with greed and misbehaviour. However, there is an interesting paradox. While rising inequality and its details are the most strongly evident, nonetheless coverage is less in 2014 than it was in 2007, resonant with the finding that there is no correlation between an increase in income inequality and its coverage (McCall 2013).

### **7.8 Political actors, images and metrics.**

This analysis now considers some additional elements of the news reports about PIE issues. These include the affiliations of party politicians, the use of images and metrics, and the way that stories were framed during these reports. Table 7.26 breaks down all political actors quoted in all PIE reports by party affiliation:

**Table 7.26 Party representation of all political actors (by percentage).**

	Channels and years combined
<b>Total politicians within all PIE stories</b>	<b>109</b>
Labour	42.2
Conservatives	28.4
Liberal Democrats	15.6
Other / unknown	10.1
Green	2.8
UKIP	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Notwithstanding that a few of the featured politicians may be international, Table 7.26 shows that of all the politicians quoted during Level 2 Content Analysis (heavily skewed towards 2014), over 42.2% represented Labour. However, despite signs that their coalition was becoming fragmented (Pitel 2014; Syal 2014; Watt and Allen 2014), if Conservative and Liberal Democrat (i.e Government) voices are combined, then they are represented almost the same amount as Labour (44.0% versus 42.2%). Generally however, the range of political parties within PIE stories shows a clear lack of diversity. Indeed, if the U.K's political landscape is now a multi-party system (Blumenau and Hix 2015), the increasing popularity of UKIP and the Green Party for example, is not reflected in Table 7.26. The absence of the Green Party is especially significant, since they in particular, might be reasonably expected to challenge the prevailing economic system which relies heavily on growth, even if this results in environmental degradation.

As has been stressed within Chapter 4, messages can be constructed not only using words, but also images. Table 7.27 examines the nature of images that are identifiably associated with poverty:

**Table 7.27 Images shown in association with poverty.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total images shown in association with poverty</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>46</b>
African or Asian slums / overcrowding / poor villages / homelessness / overcrowding	59.5	35.7	66.0	73.9
People being inactive – sitting around and so on, deserted locations	17.7	14.3	10.0	10.9
People queuing for food	5.1	25.0	4.0	2.2
People migrating	5.1	14.3	6.0	6.5
Protest and violence	7.6	3.6		2.2
People doing menial jobs	2.5	3.6	10.0	4.3
Houses/ house buying or generic consumer spending	2.5	3.6	4.0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.27 demonstrates that across both years and channels, there is a general lack of innovation within the pictorial representation of poverty, or any variance from the use of familiar images that might be anticipated ahead of coverage (see Chapter 3). Most often, images are of poor third world villages and general inactivity, and are consistent with the causes of poverty being structural, and generally outside the agency of ordinary people. Table 7.28 details the types of images associated with wealth:

**Table 7.28 Images shown in association with wealth.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total images shown in association with wealth</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
Images showing the trappings of wealth	53.3	70.0	40.0	33.3
Generic shots of overcrowding / slum living etc.	13.3	10.0	30.0	33.3
Generic shots of consumerism	26.7	10.0	30.0	16.7
Images of protest and violence	6.7			16.7
People doing menial jobs		10.0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

From Table 7.28, it is clear that despite relatively few observations, wealth is generally indexed by acquisition, possession and consumerism. Not only are images

of cars, homes and wealthy lifestyles easier to show pictorially, they also might satisfy the imaginations of audiences increasingly preoccupied by celebrity, where personal lives and the trappings of wealth are frequently reported (Berger and Choi 2010). Table 7.29 considers the images associated with the squeezed middle:

**Table 7.29 Images shown in association with the squeezed middle.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total images shown in association with the squeezed middle</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>
Families and homes	45.5	75.0	22.7	50.0
Consumer spending	36.3	25.0	18.2	18.8
People doing menial tasks	9.1		36.4	18.8
Terrorism and protest	9.1		18.2	12.5
Overcrowding			4.5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Again, there are few observations, but Table 7.29 shows little consensus regarding the squeezed middle, emphasising that the “squeeze” is difficult to show visually. However, images of families and their homes are used regularly. Table 7.30 examines imagery associated with income inequality:

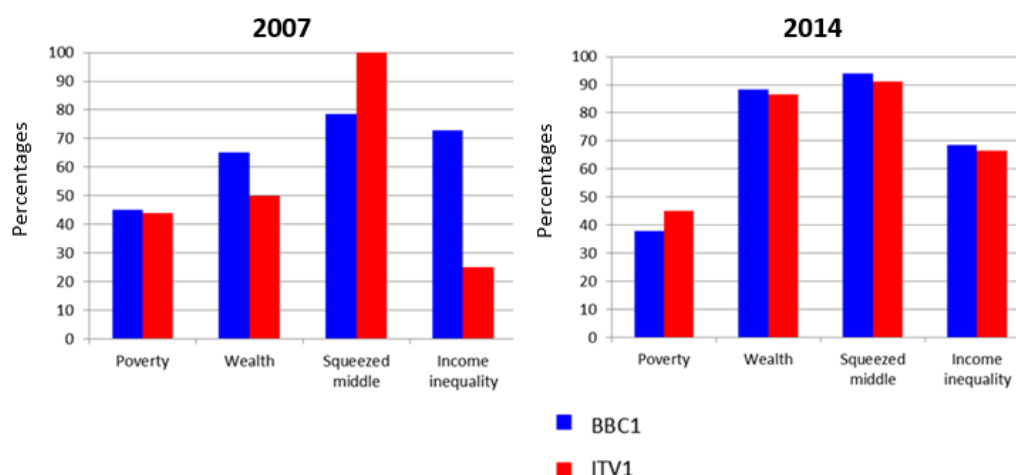
**Table 7.30 Images shown in association with income inequality.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total images shown in association with income inequality</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
Protest and dissent	10.5	26.7	53.3	37.5
African or Asian slums / overcrowding / poor villages / homelessness / overcrowding	21.1	40.0	6.7	37.5
People doing menial tasks	5.3		13.3	25.0
Trappings of wealth	21.1	6.7	13.3	
Houses/ house buying or generic consumer	15.8	6.7	6.7	
People being inactive – sitting around and so on, deserted locations	15.8	13.3		
People queuing for food	10.5	6.7	6.7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 7.30 indicates that dissent and protest was most often associated with income inequality, and that this was repeated in 2014. Again, notwithstanding a small sample, ITV1 preferred to articulate income inequality using images also familiar within poverty coverage. In 2014, income inequality was indexed by images of protest; discontent contains many popular news values which in turn might be expected to generate news coverage.

Finally, this analysis considers the use of metrics (numeric measures) within PIE reports. Figure 7.7 shows how often - as a percentage of all PIE items - some form of metric was used within PIE reporting:

**Figure 7.7 PIE items quoting some sort of metric (by percentage).**



From Figure 7.7, it seems that by 2014, poverty was slightly less often articulated using any metrics. Increasingly however, wealth and the squeezed middle were almost always described using some form of quantifying measure. While wealth can be straightforwardly described using salaries and bonuses, poverty appears to be presented as more of a state of being, with less quantification. The squeezed middle, resonating, as it does, with wider audiences, can be quantified to explain to ordinary people what is happening to their lives, including details about fluctuating pay and prices. Income inequality was again enigmatic. Data suggests that it is increasing and yet coverage was less in 2014. However, when it *is* mentioned in 2007, statistics and measures are given on BBC1 considerably more often than they are on ITV1. That discrepancy aside, there are considerable similarities between channels. Table 7.31

considers all mentions of metrics and measures across all PIE issues, and breaks them down by category:

**Table 7.31 Breakdown of types of measures used within PIE reporting.**

	2007		2014	
	BBC1	ITV1	BBC1	ITV1
<b>Total number of metrics being quoted across all PIE stories</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>232</b>
Levels of pay / personal wealth / personal expenses	24.5	27.8	41.3	41.8
Prices / value of products and possessions (housing, cars, food, bills and so on)	8.5	11.1	13.0	12.1
Inflation	13.2	11.1	5.7	6.9
Taxation levels	8.5	8.3	8.6	4.7
Cost of borrowing / interest rates / return on savings	4.7	11.1	5.1	8.6
Levels of aid / subsidy / benefits	4.7	5.6	7.9	10.8
Levels of disease/ life expectancy / mortality	9.4	13.9		
Employment rates	3.8	2.8	6.0	4.3
Housing levels / levels of repossession	4.7	2.8		
Growth			5.7	4.3
Others	17.9	5.6	6.6	6.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

While Figure 7.7 shows that the squeezed middle is the PIE issue most expressed in terms of metrics, Table 7.31 demonstrates that most often these metrics are levels of pay, personal wealth, the prices of essential items, and the rate at which these prices change. In other words, aside from any more standard/accepted statistical measures (such as the Gini coefficient for example) or wider societal impacts (such as levels of disease, mortality rates and so on), there is a preoccupation with what people are paid, and how their incomes are under increasing pressure. The lens, therefore, is fairly narrow, and the lack of wider impact is noted. In general terms, the analysis in this chapter has established:

- **PIE issues are usually addressed within edited packages and “hard” news.**
- **Besides stories about wealth, issues are treated thematically. All contribute to providing a serious, cerebral platform for these issues to be discussed.**

- Poverty and income inequality are featured less in 2014 than they were in 2007, but coverage of the squeezed middle is significantly more. Wealth was roughly the same. All PIE issues are featured less prominently in 2007 than in 2014. If these issues have become higher profile since 2014, this is not reflected in the volume and prominence of coverage.
- In 2007, poverty was predominantly an African issue, but by 2014 the emphasis shifted towards the U.K. Wealth, income inequality and the squeezed middle remain almost exclusively U.K.-based issues.
- Causality and consequence are reported less in 2014, but causation catches up with consequence in 2014. The attribution of blame is best described as sporadic, but calls for remedial action are more prevalent in 2014. Actions are defined in terms of governments and politicians; markets and the private sector are much less called upon.
- There is evidence that in 2014, citizens are used increasingly by journalists to describe PIE issues.
- Misdeeds/unethical behaviour and criminality are a consistent theme.
- Whether there is an economic recovery or not, coverage of the squeezed middle is preoccupied by pay and prices.
- There is no evidence of right wing political preference, but neither is there any diversity within the political parties represented.
- Poverty and wealth are indexed with simple visuals, while income inequality and the squeezed middle are less easy to represent visually.
- The theme of homogeneity between channels generally continues across the analysis of BBC1 and ITV1 in both years.

The tables and figures in this chapter have contributed to general blueprint of PIE coverage across years and channels. Table 7.32 summarises the blueprint and provides the key themes for the more textual analysis in Chapter 8.

**Table 7.32 Summary of quantitative findings from Chapter 7 – the characteristics of PIE news**

	Poverty	Wealth	Income Inequality	Squeezed middle
<b>Coverage</b>	Less in 2014	Roughly equal in 2007 ad 2014	Less in 2014	Much more in 2014
<b>Prominence</b>	Less substantive in 2014	Less substantive in 2014	Less substantive in 2014	Less substantive in 2014
<b>Geographic location</b>	Africa in 2007; spread in 2014	UK issue in both years	UK issue in both years	UK issue in both years
<b>Themes</b>	Cruel regimes in 2007; criminality, prevailing poverty, war but no solutions in 2014.	Misdeeds prominent across years; in 2014 attention polarises to high pay. Sports stars much in evidence.	Prevailing economic and political circumstances dominate across years.	Debt and borrowing dominate in 2007; wider discussion about cost of living, pay and the economy prevail in 2014.
<b>Causality mentioned</b>	In about 30-40% of cases in 2007; less in 2014.	In about 30% of cases in both years.	In about 30% cases in 2007; less than 25% in 2014.	Almost always despite small 2007 sample; around 60% of cases in 2014.
<b>Causes</b>	War, crop failure, government policies, prices, joblessness, victimhood and other issues beyond personal agency. Markets not complicit.	Various in 2007; in 2014, payment of high salaries and bonuses, alongside criminality and/or unethical and immoral behaviour.	Sample too small for meaningful conclusions.	Small sample in 2007; low wages and increasing prices in 2014.
<b>Actors expressing causality</b>	Emphatically journalists in 2007; similar picture in 2014, but citizens and politicians are more evident.			
<b>Consequences</b>	Varied in 2007; by 2014, crime, disease and poor living conditions - localised, individual and group conditions.	By 2014, polarised towards glamorous lifestyles, possessions, acquisitions and expensive purchases.	Small sample in 2007; in 2014 largely personal consequences of discomfort and hardship.	Small sample, physical discomfort in both years, protest and unrest added in 2014.
<b>Actors expressing consequences</b>	Across both years and channels consequences are expressed by journalists most, then citizens, with no other group especially prominent.			
<b>Causation and consequence</b>	Causation and consequence are generally less in 2014. Generally more consequences in 2007, less distinct differences in 2014.			
<b>Blame</b>	Mugabe within Zimbabwean context in 2007; blame largely absent in 2014. Generally attributed by journalists.	No blame attributed.	Very little blame attributed.	Very little blame attributed.
<b>Actors expressing blame</b>	Almost always journalists in 2007; sample very small in 2014.	No blame attributed.	Very little blame attributed.	Very little blame attributed.
<b>Action</b>	In 2007 and 2014, action directed at the UK government.			
<b>Actors advocating action</b>	Overwhelmingly politicians in both years, but business people more prominent in 2014.			
<b>Other discourses</b>	Generally involves misery, prevailing economic and political conditions. Misdeeds and greed also evident.	Uncomplimentary. Discourses in support of wealth, for example philanthropy, much less evident.	Consistently linked to greed and misbehaviour. Rise and specifics of inequality also noted.	In 2014, generally whether there is a financial recovery or not, albeit other discourses also represented.
<b>Political parties quoted</b>	Across both years and channels, Labour is the most quoted political party. Very little diversity outside of the main parties.			
<b>Images within reports</b>	Conclusively poor third world villages, and general inactivity.	Generally indexed by acquisition and possession.	A small sample, but indexed by images of protest.	A small sample, but generally ordinary families at home.
<b>Framings</b>	Thematic in 2007, less so in 2014	Conclusively episodic.	Emphatically thematic.	Emphatically thematic.
<b>How often metrics</b>	Less often than the other issues.	More often in 2014.	The most often in both years.	More often than not in both years.
<b>What sorts of metrics</b>	Conclusively levels of pay, pricing levels and the changes therein.			



## **Chapter 8. Rich material but poor journalism? Reporting PIE issues on TV news.**

Chapter 7 established the typical characteristics of PIE reporting. This chapter enhances these characteristics by adding qualitative richness to complement numerical findings. Each PIE issue is now examined in turn; key findings include a considerable shift in the focus of poverty coverage, a preoccupation with consumerism and misbehaviour within wealth coverage, a notable paucity of stories about income inequality, and the post-crisis dominance of the squeezed middle. The emerging narrative - resonant with findings from Chapter 6 and further developed in Chapter 9 - is that while the crisis may have refashioned EBF reporting, the major concepts of capitalism and neoliberal economics prevail without challenge. The analysis begins with an examination of poverty coverage.

### **8.1 Poverty: business as usual, then famines to foodbanks.**

Poverty is generally found within a wide range of news stories embracing issues such as homelessness, welfare, education, charity, employment, law, crime and a range of others (see also Gilens 1996). The summary of poverty coverage (see Table 7.32) indicates that in 2007, poverty was an international issue. In total, 45.1% of BBC1 poverty stories and 56.2% of those on ITV1 concerned conflict and controversial regimes overseas, with a specific focus on Zimbabwe. Consequences are articulated more often than causality, and blame is also sometimes attributed, with Robert Mugabe and his regime clearly held responsible for Zimbabwe's deterioration. These dramatic events resonate with "burglar alarm" reporting standards that highlight startling, extraordinary events (Zaller 2003). Simply reporting events however, is not the same as providing a detailed examination of context, background and impact.

Data presented in Chapter 7 demonstrates the changing nature of pre and post crisis poverty coverage. While in 2007, coverage was more typical of the poverty coverage outlined in Chapter 3, this had changed by 2014 in terms of themes, blame and framing. As coverage of poverty concentrated more on the U.K (see Figure 7.6), reporting was less visceral but more complex. However, causality was still state-focused, and any private sector complicity was largely absent. Figure 8.1 shows how, in a BBC1 report from 2/7/07, Huw Edwards explains that Mugabe's government was demanding action from the country's private sector, threatening sanctions against those who were not conforming:

**Figure 8.1 BBC1's report about Zimbabwe on 2/7/07.**



*The government of Zimbabwe is threatening to shut down those firms which refuse to halve their prices – the desperate measure has been introduced as spiralling prices have left thousands facing starvation. Inflation is running at 8,000%, unemployment is at 80%, and life expectancy for women is 34 – that's the lowest in the world...*

Reporter Orla Guerin begins her report by explaining infant mortality rates. A charity representative comments that many are dying, before Guerin resumes:



*They are victims of a bad harvest and escalating poverty, something Robert Mugabe has inflicted on his own people...*



*In the Zimbabwe of today, the old are burying the young... this grandmother has lost a grandson, two daughters and a son in law to AIDS... now she's raising three orphans...*

Guerin outlines how Mugabe's government has suppressed opposition:



*...in recent months the regime has been busy trying to smash the already divided MDC with raids, arrests and beatings... this activist said he spent three days in hell, in police custody...*

Her report considers the realities of everyday life:



*Imagine living in a country where prices rise twice a day, where food is 100 times more expensive than it was last year, and where a worker could spend a whole month's wages on 12 loaves of bread...*



*...life expectancy has plummeted, most Zimbabweans won't see 40. And funerals are so expensive that some bodies go unclaimed at the morgue. A once proud people can't even afford to die.*

Guerin's conclusion is that people are so poor, even dying is financially problematic. Figure 8.2 shows that arguably, ITV1's report on 24/9/07 is even more powerful; the story was introduced by Mark Austin, live from the Zimbabwean/South African border:

**Figure 8.2 ITV1's report from Zimbabwe on 24/9/07.**



*Good evening from what should be one of the richest countries in Africa. In fact, Zimbabwe - behind me here - is amongst its most desperate, ruined by the man running it - Robert Mugabe. It is a country on the cusp of collapse.... inside Zimbabwe, life expectancy has fallen to 37 for men and 34 for women, inflation is running at 4,500%, 8 out of 10 people - that's 80% - have no jobs, nearly half its children - 45% - are malnourished.*

Austin's edited report describes scarce employment and poor living conditions:



*Zimbabwe is running out of almost everything - now it's running out of the most precious commodity on earth. In some places, wells are dug close to raw sewage seeping from cracked pipes... this is broken country of broken people...*

The report then focuses on a grandmother's story:



*Her 4 sons all died before they were 30, and so did their wives, so all 9 of her orphaned grandchildren are her responsibility and it isn't easy...a neighbour trying to support them said they have nowhere near enough food...*

Austin visits another township where a teacher risks identification by describing Zimbabwe as being on the brink of “total collapse”. The report returns to the grandmother, as Austin delivers some maize. The family dance and sing, “grateful for even the smallest of mercies”. The report switches focus to more violent elements:



*These are people shown no mercy by their President. This is a country crying out in pain, and crying out for help, but those cries are smothered by Robert Mugabe's brutal henchmen...*

Reporter Martin Geissler explains how Mugabe recruited squads to suppress opposition:



*...On parade at state occasions they are the picture of innocence, but away from prying eyes, at camps in the bush, they are taught a doctrine of blind faith to their leader, and brutal repression of anyone who stands in his way...*

The report concludes with an interview with Archbishop of York John Sentamu, who further highlights the cruel regime and developing humanitarian crisis.

If poverty coverage impacts legislators and policymakers (Lugo-Ocando 2014), then both reports contain the potential to influence, by virtue of their striking imagery and language. A specific focus on children, for example, is a familiar trope within poverty

reporting, and one likely to generate powerful emotional responses (Seymour 2009). For example, on BBC1, Orla Guerin describes a decimated family and asks viewers - most of whom would have no conception of such tragedy - to “imagine” the challenge of buying basic foodstuffs.

ITV1’s report is even more dramatic. Introducing the story live adds more urgency, and the “family” narrative is arguably even more tragic than that shown on BBC1, as a woman must deal with the death of eight family members and care for her grandchildren amid hunger and squalor. Finally, “cries of pain” and “cries for help” are suppressed by “brutal henchmen”, while references to “blind faith” and “repression” resonate with claims that poverty is often accompanied by sensationalism (McKendrick et al. 2008; Robinson et al. 2009).

Both reports further support inter-channel homogeneity. Seemingly, journalists from competing news channels share a single worldview (Lugo-Ocando 2014). Both channels for example, feature dramatic metrics quantifying the crisis, and both include tragic family stories, themes of suppression, brutality and hopelessness. In addition, a brutal political regime is explicitly blamed (Addae-Korankye 2014; Dogra 2014; Luis-Ocando 2014) despite findings that ascribing blame is unusual. However, both reports are exemplar of the themes established by past research which contribute to the establishment of a “traditional” blueprint of coverage. First, poverty is associated with specific, distant geographical areas (Lugo-Ocando 2014; Spectacle Productions 2014). While in these reports, ordinary Zimbabweans are shown to be deserving of sympathy, nonetheless their problems are far removed from the experiences of U.K TV news audiences. The *spectacle* of poverty, therefore, is accentuated for public consumption.

Further, while journalists condemn international regimes, discourses about western complicity are absent (Lugo-Ocando 2014). Earlier in 2007 for example, it was reported that Barclays, Standard Chartered Bank and Old Mutual “had lent the Mugabe regime about £100 million by purchasing treasury bills and government bonds” (Barnett and Christopher 2007). There is a suggestion, therefore, that coverage of international politicians might partly depend on their relationship with elite nations (Herman and Chomsky 2002; Luis-Ocando 2014). This suggests that global capitalism’s unsavoury by-products are often hidden from view.



In addition, the imagery accompanying commentary is dominated by passive women and children living in slums, with little power, status or hope (see, inter alia, Graves 1999; Seymour 2009; Lugo-Ocando 2014). Children particularly, are considered blameless and attract strong emotional responses (Seymour 2009). Accordingly, poverty has compelling potency, consistent with theories that it is “aestheticized” for public consumption (Sorenson 1991; Hanley 2009; Jensen 2014). Such powerful imagery can dominate coverage, detracting from wider explanations and contexts (Belle 2006; deMause and Rendall 2007; McKendrick et al. 2008). However, these images also resonate with expectations already established in viewers’ minds; more maverick (and perhaps more creative) expressions of poverty might not be featured since they do not conform with newsroom protocols (Lugo-Ocando 2014).

Adhering to “traditional” poverty coverage norms, the issue is framed within the narrative of chaos and crisis, meeting the criteria for “burglar alarm coverage” (Zaller 2003). Indeed, such crisis events justify journalistic attention (Lugo-Ocando 2014); perhaps ITV1 would not have committed to several days of live broadcasts had the Zimbabwean crisis been less acute. Finally, in powerfully emotive reports, journalists show personal commitment to the causes they report, often becoming witnesses rather than simply observers (Shaw 2012).

## **8.2 Poverty in focus, or celebrity in danger?**

There was less coverage of poverty in 2014 than there was in 2007, and the geographical focus changed from Africa in 2007 to the U.K in 2014. However, international poverty still featured, again conforming to traditional reporting norms. For example, Figure 8.3 shows an ITV1 item from 23/6/14, describing how actress Sienna Miller witnessed first-hand danger on a humanitarian trip to Lebanon. The story was introduced by Mark Austin:

**Figure 8.3 ITV1’s report about Sienna Miller’s trip on 23/6/14.**



*The actress Sienna Miller has been describing how she narrowly escaped being caught in a car bombing in Lebanon – she was there in her role as ambassador for an international charity. Our correspondent Nina Nannar was on the same trip when the bomb went off.*



*We are leaving in a hurry – news of a suicide bombing nearby has reached us and the humanitarian organisation we are with in Lebanon's Baca valley is taking no risks.*



*But there is no escaping violence here... this is the aftermath of the bomb that has cut short our visit. One killed and 37 injured by a suicide bomber at security checkpoint that we had come through that morning...*

Reporter Nina Nannar describes Miller's visit to a refugee camp:



*Whatever the dangers, there are fears that Syria's civil war is spilling over into Lebanon as the refugees continue to arrive...*



*There are now 12,000 settlements like this in Lebanon – a quarter of the country's population is now made up of Syrian refugees...*



*Camps expected to be temporary now have an air of permanence – the pressure on resources, water, food, electricity and healthcare is huge...*

Nannar concludes the report by describing a dramatic end to Miller's visit:



*Minutes later with the security heightened by the suicide bombing, we have to leave, but it is an operation not open to more than a million others.*

This report contains established and standard images of women, children and general passivity. However, it begins and ends with details of Sienna Miller's "narrow escape". Closer analysis of the language used, however, suggests that this might not have been as close as suggested. For example, the explosion at the checkpoint they "had come through that morning", was actually much less close than the "narrow escape" indicated by Mark Austin. The report concludes with another reminder of the apparent danger to Sienna Miller, and overall, her appearance resonates with contentions that while celebrities attract media attention, overly theatrical coverage detracts from the real issue of poverty (Van den Bulck and Panis 2010; Lugo-Ocando 2014). In this report, it is a lesser concern than Sienna Miller's "escape", and while relief agencies might welcome celebrities to act as conduits for media attention (Sorenson 1991), celebrity news values prevail nonetheless.

In sum, poverty in 2007 resonates strongly with the traditional and depressing models of international poverty outlined in Chapter 3. Most notably, poverty is international, and incorporates drama, startling images and statistics. Section 8.3 meanwhile, shows how the financial crisis has refashioned poverty reporting, bringing it closer to home and changing it into a new form.

### **8.3 U.K poverty in 2014: a new type of "bank" and new types of tyranny.**

In 2014, "home" coverage of poverty did not involve oppressed dissent, high inflation and short life expectancies, but criminality and immorality are still evident within a new U.K context. Criminality and slavery, for example, are the main themes in 23.2% of BBC1 poverty stories, and 32.2% of those on ITV1 in 2014 (see Table 7.3). Figure 8.4 relates to a BBC1 story on 7/1/14, when reporter Danny Savage delivered a typical tale of "modern day slavery":



**Figure 8.4** BBC1's report about modern day slavery on 7/1/14.



*This is the horrendous violence that Craig Kinsella was subjected to... David Rook, his wife and son treated the 34 year old – who has learning difficulties – like a slave at their home in Sheffield...*



*He would work for hours at the family home, cleaning their ice cream vans, and was paid nothing... he was forced to scavenge food from the wheelie bin, and used a bucket for a toilet*

Savage describes the judge's comments during sentencing:



*“You treated him like a dog... The hatred is simply immeasurable.”*

Judge PETER KELSON QC

*Judge Peter Kelson QC told them, his will had been completely broken by the way you treated him... you treated him like a dog... the hatred is simply immeasurable...*

Similarly, Figure 8.5 describes another report about slavery, delivered by ITV1's Juliet Bremner on 5/12/14. The episode featured as a sub story in a report outlining how the proposed Anti-Slavery Bill may not adequately protect the vulnerable. However, it begins with a victim of slavery:

**Figure 8.5** ITV1's report about modern day slavery on 7/1/14. UK



*My name is Anula, but they called me animal names, like dog and cow... they have no respect...*

*Juliet Bremner - A 44 year old mother of two, Anula is a domestic worker from Sri Lanka, brought to Britain by her wealthy Middle Eastern employers...*



*I watch five children... I am cooking... cleaning also, ironing also... any little mistake, my employers shout at me (breaks down in tears).*



*She was living in an exclusive neighbourhood in London but was being routinely abused, sleeping on the floor, never allowed alone, and crucially, when the family moved to the U.K, they stopped paying her...*

The report focuses on the victim (Anula) and her attempts to escape and how, in the process, she became an illegal immigrant because her employers withheld her passport. Bremner concludes by suggesting that there are many such victims. Once more, a visceral, powerful story attracts attention (Shiff 2003), and is enhanced by a narrative reflecting civilised society's horror that such poverty and misery can occur so locally (Luis-Ocando 2014). Again, traditional perceptions that poverty is inevitable, or due to laziness or demotivation (Hanley 2009) can be challenged. Both stories are characterised by strong imagery of the vulnerable and the needy.

In addition, both reports feature the main types of "other discourses" present within poverty stories across years and channels, namely the misery and distress of poverty, and the sometime criminal and/or questionable behaviour of the powerful. These are significant themes across PIE coverage, embracing outright imprisonment, cruelty and fraud, and more subtle examples that might be considered as unethical or immoral. Almost by definition, U.K poverty will be less dramatic but can be powerful nonetheless. This is exemplified in Figure 8.6, which outlines a BBC1 report on 8/12/14 which discusses a parliamentary report about U.K poverty. The edited report is narrated by Mark Easton:

**Figure 8.6** BBC1's report about increasing poverty in the UK on 8/12/14.



*We have so much food we literally throw away hundreds of thousands of tonnes of what's called "surplus" every year...*



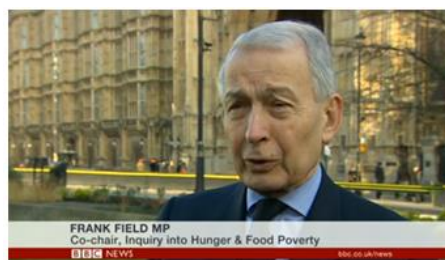
*Any yet... and yet a report signed by parliamentarians from all parties finds a Britain where hunger stalks the land, people scavenging, 4 million at risk of simply not having enough to eat...*

Mark Easton continues with some statistical comparisons:



*The report says that the U.K.'s poorest have fared less well than those in many developed countries - hit by the rising cost of essentials - here, food has gone up 47% in a decade, in Germany, it's just 22%. With housing, rents are up 30% in 10 years, in Germany it's 12%, and while fuel costs in Britain rose 154 %, in Germany, it was half that...*

Easton's report includes a soundbite from Frank Field, a Labour politician known for his strong views about poverty:



*...to think we actually have a system which pays people to destroy food, while at the same time - while they listen to this programme - people are hungry... it's cruelty on stilts...*

The report then features a brother and sister, apparently reliant on foodbanks:



Girl - *I can last a week without eating...*  
 Boy - *She never eats at all hardly...I have to eat because I had a job – I need to eat because otherwise I'll collapse... I collapsed at work once as we had nothing to eat...*

The report switches focus to the press conference delivering the report, before Easton concludes:



*Today's report says it doesn't want to point the finger at any particular institution, but does say that Britain's welfare system is complicated, cumbersome and not fit for purpose... benefit delays are causing considerable hardship... and the inconsistent sanctions can mean that vulnerable groups can be left without any money at all for weeks or even months...*

On 16/4/14, and as shown in Figure 8.7, ITV1 also ran a story about the increasing reliance on foodbanks, which took the form of an edited package by Penny Marshall:

**Figure 8.7 ITV1's report about increasing poverty in the UK on 16/4/14.**



*In the food banks of Britain, products are flying off the shelves...any shoots of recovery don't touch the people who come here... people like Steven Jones, who's been looking for work for five years...*

Marshall asks what Steven Jones would do without the foodbanks - his stark response is that he would "probably starve":



*Hard times...I mean, people don't have enough money to survive any more...the Government don't give us enough money to live on, so it's either the kids go without, or I go without, and I'd rather the kids have food before I have anything to eat...*



Marshall continues:



*Nearly everyone I spoke to was struggling with benefit delays or sanctions... where the state stopped giving, volunteers have stepped in...*

This is followed by some food bank volunteers commenting about how busy they are, before Penny Marshall quotes the government as saying that publicity has fuelled the use of foodbanks. This, in turn, is followed by a soundbite from Coalition Employment Minister, Esther McVey MP:



*Do not blame the Coalition government that came into power to stop and halt the recession and build back up the country, but we know it's been a tough time – it's been tough for you, for me, for everyone in the UK...*

The report is concluded by Marshall, who again refers to Steven Jones, now shown with his family:



*But for those like Steven Jones – still dependent on foodbanks to feed his family, the cycle of poverty and dependency is yet to be broken...*

Both reports are characteristic of 2014 poverty coverage, where episodic framings are more prominent than in 2007 (see Figure 7.1). Once again, there is homogeneity between channels as general discourses are intertwined with personal stories. The unnamed brother and sister and Steven Jones are central to these reports. While their discomfort may not compare with Zimbabwean poverty for example, nonetheless their daily lives appear challenging; stories of collapsing in work, and

near starvation are consistent with claims that food, and food banks in particular, are strongly indexical of poverty (deMause and Rendall 2007; Blundell and Etheridge 2010; Trussell Trust 2016).

“Local” poverty seems less easy to show than international poverty (Luis-Ocando 2014). The use of U.K foodbanks “tripled in the 12 months prior to September 2013” (Dorling 2014, p.75-6), and here they are key indicators, since while clearly people do not choose poverty (Dorling 2014), in strong contrast with the Zimbabwean stories, there are less visual indicators to demonstrate the condition in the U.K. Indeed, Mark Easton introduces the rhetorical contrast with Germany to assist his making of an otherwise problematic point.

What can be established from both reports is that in contrast to considerable research regarding poverty coverage, the poor are neither faceless, invisible nor undeserving, and unlike established claims that it ignores those affected (Luis-Ocando 2014), the poor themselves are prominent. In 2014, for example, citizens represent 26.7% those citing causality on BBC1 and 22.6% on ITV1. These have increased from 6.3% and 8.0% respectively in 2007 (see Table 7.10).

In both years, and aside from journalists, citizens are the dominant contributors in PIE reports. The appearance of citizens, and the lesser prominence of primary sources supports the emerging trend that EBF issues have become humanised. However, while 2014 poverty coverage shows variances from established norms, some other elements of poverty coverage have not changed. For example, while the consequences of poverty are clear (hunger, misery, desperation and so on), long term causes are not discussed in detail, consistent with the pattern that causality is overshadowed by consequence (Kim et al. 2010; Lugo-Ocando 2014). Those causes that *are* mentioned include the lack of work mentioned by Penny Marshall, and the inadequate welfare systems proposed by Steven Jones. Any claims that austerity is to blame are refuted by Esther McVey, whose suggestion that she herself was having a “tough time” goes unchallenged. If BBC news discourses are often claimed to placate the Coalition Government (Gilligan 2013), then on this evidence, ITV1 can be similarly charged.

Steven Jones' assertion that inadequate welfare systems cause poverty is consistent with governments being held responsible in thematic reports (Iyengar 1990; Kendall 2012). Indeed, Table 7.19 shows government action is presented as the major solution to help ease the four PIE issues (73.7% of BBC1 stories, 47.8% on ITV1). Any lack of serious critique of the government is confirmed, however, when in conclusion, Mark Easton acknowledges that the parliamentary report cites the complicity of the welfare system. This however, is mitigated by his prefix that the report does not wish to "point its finger at any particular institution".

Omissions are key within CDA, since if ideas are not mentioned, they are not scrutinised (Huckin 1997). Significantly, there is no mention of any private sector complicity. Disposal of excess food for example, involves producers and retailers whom have agency to address the supply/demand deficit. They might fill what Penny Marshall suggests is the gap between the state and the volunteers who offer their time and food. Major supermarkets donating surplus stock to charity is fully feasible and realistic (Molloy 2015), yet the private sector is absent in these stories, despite the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 3, their employment, recruitment, training and pay policies are all considered to be factors that increase poverty. Agency to change remains with the state rather than with the markets (Hay and Smith 2000; De Ville and Orbie 2014). For example, any suggestions that capitalism is complicit in the increasing reliance on foodbanks are absent, and the familiar master narrative of neoliberalism is not challenged. Furthermore, the general lack of any expert voices throughout PIE coverage means that such criticisms are unlikely.

However, poverty coverage is not unchanged; it has moved "closer to home", and as per the news value of consonance, more locally-based stories are more meaningful for ordinary people than criminally violent foreign regimes and the lack of basic essentials. Further, the 2014 coverage of poverty strongly challenges some other media theories.

One theory that can be challenged, for example, is that poverty coverage is dominated by elite, primary definers and that media do not attend to the poor themselves (Cohen 1997; deMause and Rendall 2007; McKendrick et al. 2008). In 2014, and consistent with the increasing prominence of citizen voices in TV news reports about PIE issues, the poor themselves are featured front and centre. In

addition, rather than the poor being shown as underserving and complicit in their own condition (Mantsios 2005), or as some form of lawless, deviant underclass (see, inter alia, Shields 2001; Hodgetts et al. 2005; Mantsios 2005; Hanley 2009), the poor are seen more as victims of circumstance beyond their control.

Even though poverty presentations are slightly more episodic in 2014, individual attributions are missing, and causes are systemic, structural and fatalistic rather than individual (see Chapter 3). This challenges claims that in TV news, “poverty is clearly an individual-level rather than a societal phenomenon” (Iyengar 1990, p.22). Alongside claims that thematic framings might be impersonal (Kendall 2012) or harder to understand (Dorling 2011), poverty coverage in 2014 is notably less thematic than in 2007. This is consistent with those who suggest that poverty coverage is more impactful when episodic (see, inter alia, Kendrick et al. 2008; Delvaux and Rinne 2009; Robinson et al. 2009).

In sum, as Lugo-Ocando (2014) suggests, the financial crisis has redefined poverty. This research finds that coverage has become localised and humanised by involving citizens whose experiences resonate with U.K audiences. However, as is the case with EBF reporting more generally, though it has made progressive steps away from clichéd reporting, some elements of hackneyed and stereotypical coverage endure. Wider discussions of cause, effect and policy are marginalised, and socio-economic connections are well hidden, if not absent altogether (Belle 2006; DeMause and Rendall 2007; McKendrick et al. 2008). The open market, liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation are all unchallenged, and news is constructed to suit market-driven economies (Redden 2011; Luis-Ocando 2014). Any critical examination of capitalism, and the ways it might contribute to poverty are absent. The reasons for this are discussed in Chapter 9.

#### **8.4 Wealth: spend, spend, spend.**

Political debate relating to inequality is preoccupied with poverty, disadvantage and “hard-working families”, while focus on the “extremely wealthy” is much less prominent (Sheldon et al. 2009, p.10). In contrast, this research finds that while there were appreciably more stories containing poverty than wealth in 2007, in 2014 the number of stories was similar. In both years, coverage was conclusively episodic, consistent with theories that episodic framings are more common than thematic



framings in TV news (Iyengar 1990; Shields 2001), also resonating with notions that human stories are more compelling than social causes (McKendrick et al. 2008). Wealth reports in both years continued to focus on individuals, a trend exemplified by the U.S trial and imprisonment of media tycoon Conrad Black.

Figure 8.8 shows ITV1's story on 13/7/07, describing the conclusion of the trial. It functions as a microcosm of wealth coverage, containing many emergent elements and themes. The story is introduced by James Mates, who explains that Black was found guilty of fraud, and obstruction of justice:

**Figure 8.8** ITV1 reports the conclusion of Conrad Black's trial on 13/7/07.



*The court heard the former owner of the Daily Telegraph defrauded companies he ran out of £30 million. Black and his wife - the journalist Barbara Amiel - had lived a flamboyant lifestyle of parties, personal jets and powerful friends but the jury decided it was being paid for by shareholder's money....*

Reporter Bill Neely reminds viewers about Black's bullishness, but that this was unfounded:



*...but the trial has found him a fraudster – what the prosecution called a bank robber in a shirt and tie.*

*...he ran his newspaper chain as a private piggy bank, defrauding shareholders and diverting \$50 million to himself and his friends...*

The report cuts to the official prosecutor who expresses satisfaction over the conviction before Neely resumes and describes Black's lifestyle:



*...and he had lots of it (money) - lavish homes - one had a \$6,000 toilet seat and a five-star lifestyle, all funded through fraud...*



*The parties in his Kensington home attracted royalty – he loved the company of the rich, the powerful and the famous... he was once frequent guest at Downing street, owner of the Telegraph, media mogul, Lord Black of Crossharbour...*

Neely describes Black's indulgent lifestyle, and the report cuts to some miniature soldiers:



*No more toys either – he was obsessed by Napoleon...*

This is followed by a short contribution by Black's biographer, who describes his arrogance and greed, and another by Black's lawyers, who say they will mount a legal challenge. Bill Neely concludes the report:



*He now faces decades in jail, and millions in fines, with homes, cars and jewels seized...*

*...the man who had everything now has almost nothing – his freedom and his reputation lost...*

Coverage continues with a live exchange between James Mates and Andrew Neil, who is described as “someone who knew Conrad Black”:



*JM - You knew Conrad Black; this was truly spectacular fall from grace – what caused it?*

*AN - I knew him well and it is a huge fall from grace. And it happened because he began to think of himself as a master of the universe - that the rules that applied to mere mortals did not apply to him... and that this company - which was a public company - was his own private fiefdom and he could do what he wanted...*

Mates asks if Black’s parties were “as extravagant as made out in court”, and Neil responds:



*Yes, he lived an extravagant lifestyle – two private jets, houses on three continents but that is now why he went down today ... he went down because he used a number of techniques to get money out of the company that wasn't his... It sends a message that the rules of corporate governance – how you run a company are now much tighter... this has sent a message to all businessmen that they have to follow the rules...*

Black was not sentenced until 10/12/07, and the BBC1 report that day (shown in Figure 8.9) includes a report by Adam Brookes. He begins by explaining that Black’s legal team were protesting his innocence and would appeal the judgement. Brookes’ commentary begins with a summary:

**Figure 8.9 BBC1 reports the sentencing of Conrad Black on 10/12/07.**



*It was back in July that Conrad Black was found guilty of siphoning off millions of dollars from his company Hollinger, money which went on mansions and munificence... His wife, the writer and socialite Barbara Amiel – she of the \$2000 handbags – once famously said that her extravagance knew no bounds ...*

The report includes various clips of Black claiming his innocence before Brookes suggests that “this is a story of colossal hubris...” The report then cuts to Andrew Neil:



*Conrad got into this predicament in the first place because he came to see himself as a master of the universe, that ordinary rules - rules that apply to ordinary people - didn't apply to him, and that there was nothing he couldn't get away with...*

The report concludes by noting that despite expressing regret, Black had not actually apologised. Both reports typify the dominant episodic framings evident in wealth coverage across years and channels, and despite some obvious transatlantic elements, the U.K emphasis dominates since Black is primarily framed as an ennobled member of British society. Consistent with many wealth stories across both years, the narrative strongly focuses on the details of one wealthy person, emphasising Black's criminality and fall from grace, including references to the “bank robber in the shirt and tie” and the “arrogant” belief he was beyond the “rules”. The focus, therefore, is episodically directed and focuses on events, rather than surrounding causes and circumstances.

Placing this coverage within wider theoretical contexts, the concerns of the wealthy differ from those of ordinary people. Table 7.23 shows that discourses of philanthropy are overwhelmed by negative framings of wealth (11.8% versus 32.4% on BBC1, and 0% versus 66.7% on ITV1 in 2007; 3.2% on ITV1 versus 50.8% on BBC1 and 7.1% on ITV1 versus 59.5% on BBC1 in 2014). There is little onscreen evidence therefore, that the wealthy are caring and kind. In contrast with positive presentations of endeavour and success (Ladd and Bowman 1998; Kumar 2005; McCall 2013), these reports reflect some degree of entertainment and pleasure at the misfortune of the wealthy and the exposure that their wealth is undeserved (Seymour 2009; Kendall 2012; Thomas 2016). Both quantitatively (see Chapter 7) and qualitatively, therefore, wealth is framed negatively (see also McKendrick et al. 2008; Kinsley and Clarke 2009; Cassidy 2011), and the wealthy are often shown to be miscreants (see also Mantsios 2005; Kendall 2012). Moreover, rather than a

discussion embracing the wider societal implications, the reporting horizon is limited to the here and now.

In addition, considerable attention is paid to Black's "lavish lifestyle". James Mates for example, asks *specifically* about his parties. On both channels, particular items are mentioned, such as the "\$6,000 toilet seat", the "\$2,000 handbag", "toys", "private jets" and "parties" attended by royalty. Such detail further contributes to inequality rhetoric such as "the richest spend more on scatter cushions than the poorest spend on food" (Hood 2015). This focus is consistent with media preoccupations with celebrity lifestyle (Sedghi 2013), the costs of possessions (Kendall 2012) reflecting the post-war consumption boom (Butterick 2015). Descriptions of defrauded millions, it seems, are insufficient, and must be re-emphasised with the extra details of the acquisition the crime facilitates. Here, more unusually however, while the consequences of wealth are explained (lifestyle), so are the causes (criminality). The wider issue of corporate governance, however, which lacks any obviously salacious news value, remains unexplored.

These reports also confirm that inter-bulletin homogeneity was evident in 2007, as both reports take a similar form and feature Andrew Neil, who describes Black as "Master of the Universe" on different channels, five months apart. Specific analysis of these interviews with Neil provides added insight. First, they are notably different in terms of pace, ITV1's live element offering a breathless contrast to the more reflective tone of the later BBC1 report. While *these* are different, both interviews are characterised by references to the apparently unimpeachable rules of corporate governance. Indeed, explains Andrew Neil, Black was not being punished for his *lifestyle*, but for the way he obtained his wealth. Seemingly, creating wealth for shareholders is something to aspire to. The inference is that although such behaviour is unacceptable, the way capitalism incentivises such behaviour *is* legitimate, so long as "rules" are observed. As Chairman of the "right wing" *Spectator* magazine, Andrew Neil's views would have been well known to those constructing these reports.

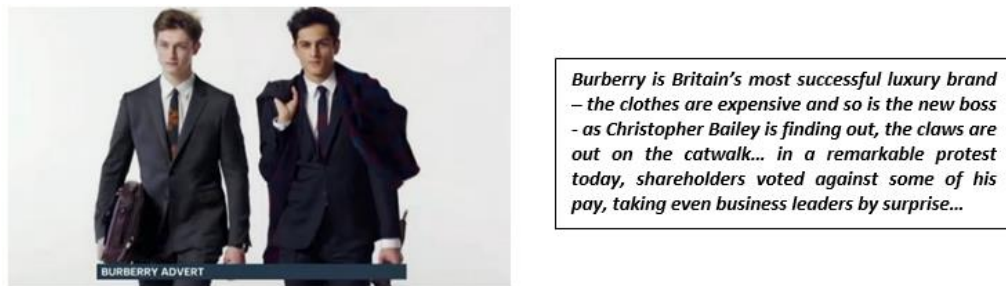
#### **8.5 Executive pay: people, rather than systems under pressure.**

Criminality, or unethical/immoral behaviour strongly underpin the wealth reporting within this research. In 2014 however, Table 7.8 shows that high salaries or bonuses were the dominant driving source of wealth (37.5% of BBC1 stories, and 58.3% of



ITV1 stories). There is also a focus on whether such executive remuneration is deserved. Since the Shareholder Spring of 2012, there has been increased scrutiny of such issues (Thomas 2016), typified by Figure 8.10, which shows how, on 11/7/14, ITV1 reported that Burberry shareholders had rejected the remuneration of their CEO, Christopher Bailey. The report featured a package by Business Editor Richard Edgar who began his report:

**Figure 8.10** ITV1's report about CEO remuneration at Burberry on 11/7/14.



The report cuts to a contribution from a representative from the Institute of Directors:



The report returns to Edgar, who explains Bailey's salary using studio graphics:





*Now a significant proportion of Burberry's investors voted against that, but more than half rejected two other share rewards - £4.9 million worth in 2010, and just over £14 million last year. The Chairman explained today that these were to keep Bailey at Burberry as rival fashion houses try to poach him. But there's more - when he took on the top job at Burberry, he got what you could call a golden hello again - £7.3 million - none of this was performance related.*

*Since the shareholder spring of 2012, pay this high has gone out of fashion amongst other large UK companies, says an advisor to Burberry Shareholders....*



The report cuts to an advisor to Burberry shareholders, who explains how large companies had begun to take notice of such dissent. Edgar concludes the report with some final commentary over more fashion images:



*Today's vote isn't binding but it has damaged the company's relationship with its investors. Burberry's bosses will be in a hurry to get back in step.*

The emphasis on lifestyle and consumption is still evident in wealth stories in 2014, strongly indexed here by the images opening and concluding Edgar's report. As in the Barclays story in Figure 6.23, criticism of high-end remuneration is enhanced by comments by the Institute of Directors, whose natural position can be assumed to generally support director-type salaries.

Resonant with extant literature, from Edgar's report it is clear that Bailey's pay is "camouflaged" by dividing it into separate dimensions (Kay and Van Putten 2007; Weisbach 2007). Since these dimensions will be taxed differently (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2006; 2012), the package is likely to be "tax efficient". Basic salaries indeed, are a decreasing element of executive

remuneration (Piketty and Saez 2006; Bell and Van Reenen 2010), and in this case, Bailey's basic pay is considerably less than 20% of his annual remuneration. As has been explained, such sums inevitably require justification (Main et al. 1995; Kostova and Zaheer 1999), especially when others are experiencing unprecedented financial pressure.

Such justifications of high remuneration include tournament or superstar theory (Lazar and Rosen 1981; Bell and Van Reenen 2010; Lloyd 2010), or the rationale that such roles require extraordinary commitment and sacrifice (Takala and Aaltio 2007; Gwartney et al. 2011). Instead, Burberry's defence is one of retention, and that high pay will prevent competitors "poaching" Bailey. This somewhat vague and slippery argument is difficult to test and is undermined by Richard Edgar, who implies excess and a disconnect with any measures of performance. Such executive pay stories contain several elements that make them compelling and interesting (Hamilton and Zeckhauser 2004). Here however, although ITV1 tangibly moved beyond statistically-driven EBF news stories, numerical data is still important. Furthermore, the example provides further evidence that ITV1's approach to executive remuneration is combative, and not discernibly influenced by commercial pressure.

In general, and across channels and years, stories about wealth are dominated by the financial sector. The general criticism of high remuneration in the *banking* industry is exemplified by the BBC1 report on 30/7/14. This is detailed in Figure 8.11, and explains that bankers' bonuses may be subject to repayment in the event of any unethical or illegal behaviour. Anchor Huw Edwards introduced the story:

**Figure 8.11** BBC1's report on 30/07/14 about how bank bonuses might be repaid.



*For successful bankers, big bonus cheques have come to be expected, but after the financial crisis, a string of scandals and public anger, from January next year future cheques may end up going back.*



Reporter Simon Jack looks at an expensive car, and suggests that if he were a banker, such a purchase would be within financial reach. However, he says, there is a complication:



*But under the new rules, up to 7 years after I get my bonus, I may have to return the money and the keys... Barclays set aside another £900 million today, to compensate people mis-sold payment protection insurance – a timely reminder perhaps that misconduct can take many years to unearth, and why these new measures may be needed.*

Jack's report cuts to a contribution from a banking industry representative:



*We now have the toughest regime in banking pay of any global financial centre – bankers are actually paid less here than they are in New York, Singapore and Hong Kong, and ultimately, this could have an impact on the competitiveness of London as a financial centre and the jobs and tax paid here.*

A former financial sector worker then offers some interpretation:



*This is really a very bold package of measures. First of all it raises the spectre of criminal sanctions, secondly it hits bankers in their pockets, and thirdly it defines everyone's rules very clearly so that the regulators know exactly where to go. I suppose one other point to make is that if bankers really do run offshore, as they are threatening to do in the event of these rules coming in, it's a terrible indictment on the industry as a whole.*

Simon Jack then summarises the story:



*Recklessness, interest rate rigging, money laundering, mis-selling – these scandals have cost the city its reputation, and taxpayers and shareholders hundreds of millions of pounds, but what about the individuals – it's hoped that these tough new rules will change the culture of the people working right here in the heart of banking.*

The report then includes some vox pop contributions:



*Can you imagine every single banker taking their own lawyer and bringing him right to court – I mean you'd have to think through the methodology of the whole thing, right? They want claw back 7 years right? 7 years – really?*



*No – no - that'd be tough - really tough - no I'm happy to uh - yearly would definitely the way forward but 7 years is um – ridiculous - no uh, I'd probably leave find myself a new career...*



*They aren't accountable are they, for the way that they behave as they would be in any other industry, so yeah, uh – I would support that move for sure.*

Simon Jack concludes the report thus:



*The bonus party may not quite be over but some of the champagne may have to go back on ice for a little while longer. Simon Jack, BBC News.*

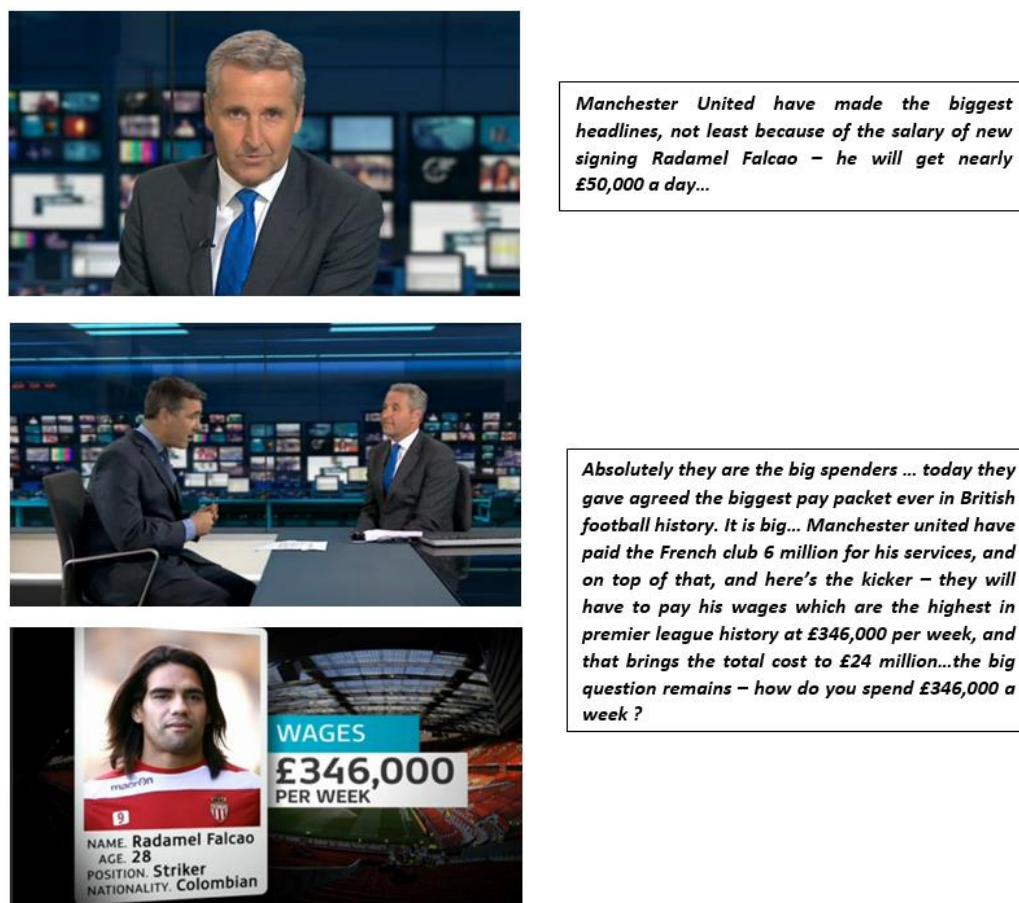
This report is typical in that it focuses on the banking sector which dominates EBF reporting and contains many of the “elite 1%” (Dorling 2014, p.51). It is unusual, however, since it presents pay thematically rather than episodically.

Once more, wealth is indexed by what it might be spent on, which in this case is an expensive car. Consistent with theories that some organisations are favoured for media scrutiny (Otten 2010), as per the earlier case study, Barclays is singled out as a bank beset with problems. Speaking for the banking sector, Anthony Browne introduces the familiar banking defence that onerous industry rules will make London a less attractive financial centre, placing it in a potentially disadvantageous competitive position versus other financial centres. Notably, perhaps to elicit popular support, he expands the argument to embrace “jobs” and “tax”. Philip Augar reiterates another common defence that if bankers were more regulated, they will “run offshore”.

Once again, as in the earlier interviews with Andrew Neil, Simon Jack and Philip Augar refer to “rules”, once again suggesting a preoccupation with adherence to systems, rather than any focus on the fundamental principles underpinning them. Ultimately, the pertinent question is not whether bonuses are deserved, but if and how they should be repaid if recipients were found to be operating “outside the rules”. Payments to those operating within the regulations are unchallenged. Indeed, the first two vox pops of the three featured do not support recalling bonuses. Simon Jack’s coda uses the rhetorical device of metaphor, as he suggests the champagne should stay “on ice a little while longer”. Not only does this again use a lifestyle reference to index wealth, it implicitly suggests only a delay in consuming the champagne, and not a cancellation. BBC1 once again appear to defer to neoliberal economic thinking.

Another element within wealth coverage is a preoccupation with the salaries commanded by sporting stars - particularly footballers (Seymour 2009) - despite sportspeople representing a “tiny fraction” of the “elite 1%” (Dorling 2014, p.50). Figure 8.12 shows a typical example. It describes an ITV1 report on 1/9/14, explaining that Manchester United had made a major new signing. The report consisted of a live exchange between Mark Austin and Sport Correspondent Ian Payne:

**Figure 8.12** ITV1 report that Falcao has signed for Manchester United on 1/9/14.



Again, this report is typically episodic, and focuses on the sum involved. Austin rounds the salary to “nearly £50,000”, adding to the underlying astonishment, since in contrast to suggestions that the sums paid to celebrities and CEOs are not perceived as “inherently unjust” (Ladd and Bowman 1998, p.4), the whole report is underpinned by a sense of disbelief. In addition, the lexical choice of “wages” is somehow incongruous, yet implicitly encourages viewers to compare the sum to their own “wages”. The preoccupation with pay is reconfirmed, and despite the incredulity, neither reporter questions the system allowing such large sums. The “big question” indeed, is not how such salaries are justified against the prevailing socio-

economic backdrop, but how such amounts might be spent. The emphasis, again, is on consumerism and acquisition.

The coverage of wealth can therefore be simply summarised. Consistently covered across both years in terms of the quantity of coverage, it is a U.K.-based issue, and almost always presented episodically. Despite pre-recession research findings that wealth was generally perceived as positive (Ladd and Bowman 1998), post-crisis misdeeds, criminality and unethical behaviour are consistent themes, with evidence of wealth facilitating philanthropy and good deeds almost entirely absent. Payment of high salaries and bonuses are especially scrutinised in 2014, and wealth is typically framed in terms of what possessions and lifestyles it provides. In general, while those at the top of the income distribution have “money to burn” and viewers are invited to consider how they might spend £346,000 per week, many watching will be concerned about how to cover their essential monthly costs. Moreover, the system allowing wealth to be accumulated might have changed slightly, with adherence to “the system” also appearing more important than challenging the system’s basic core (Mantsios 2005). Besides poverty and wealth, the third PIE condition is the squeezed middle, and it is to this that the analysis now turns.

#### **8.6 The squeezed middle: a more recent phenomenon.**

The redefinition of U.K class in recent times is characterised by several new phrases including “the squeezed middle” (Biressi and Nunn 2013). The phrase has been adopted as a political discourse - often by Labour politicians - to describe how ordinary people have been affected by falling pay, austerity and other factors connected to the financial crisis (Dittmann et al. 2011; Thomas 2016). Millions may have been “squeezed” by reduced living standards, albeit the discomfort falls short of the official measure of poverty. The squeezed middle category barely existed in 2007; there were only 18 stories containing references to it, but over five times more in 2014. Consequently, this analysis focuses on coverage in 2014. Of the four PIE issues, the squeezed middle comfortably receives most coverage; this is consistent with Michael Jerney’s claim that ITV1 “have featured lots of stories about people who are the squeezed middle because a lot of those people are our core audience” (interview on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For full interview transcript, see Appendix 8.



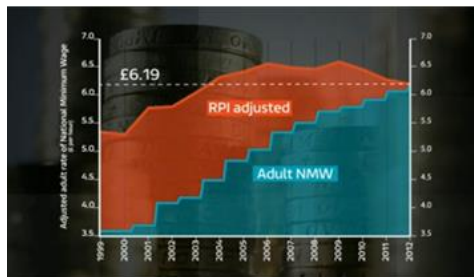
Coverage of the squeezed middle is thematic across channels and years, and almost exclusively U.K.-based. Coverage is typified by a preoccupation with pay and prices, the cost of living and the levels of discomfort that this might bring. Table 7.6, for example, shows how in 2014, pay or the prices of essential outgoings were the dominant themes. The report on ITV1 on 16/1/14 (shown in Figure 8.13) was the bulletin's lead story that evening, and exemplar of this focus. Anchor Julie Etchingham described how Chancellor George Osborne had speculated about a possible increase in the National Minimum Wage (NMW):

**Figure 8.13** ITV1's report on the Chancellor's comments on 16/1/14.



*The chancellor signalled today that he would back an above inflation increase in the minimum wage. George Osborne even hinted at a figure - £7 an hour before 2016 - to counter the effects of inflation. Such a figure, if the Low Pay Commission agrees, would benefit nearly 1.5 million workers. Mr Osborne said he wanted them to benefit from improvements in the economy, but industry leaders warned that it could cost jobs...*

Reporter Chris Ship begins with suggestions of a disagreement between the Chancellor and Business Secretary Vince Cable, who in a short soundbite, reminds viewers that the Low Pay Commission sets the NWM, and not the Chancellor. Ship explains what had happened to pay:



*Since 1999, the adult national minimum wage rose from £3.60 to the current £6.31, but add in inflation, and the rate stopped rising in real terms 5 years ago; it's thought that £7 per hour would now be needed to restore its value...*

The report cuts to John Cridland from the Confederation of British Industry:



**CS - If the Low Pay Commission recommend a rate of £7 per hour, what would be the effect on jobs?**

**JC - I think an increase in the minimum wage of 5%, 2 years running, with a fragile recovery, especially fragile in the high street, would create unemployment.**

The report then includes a contribution from an employer:



*We would find it very difficult unless we could raise our prices to work within the industry in which we work, and ultimately if we couldn't, our guards would be unemployed.*

Ship recaps the Conservative Party's relationship with the NMW, followed by a contribution from Labour's Chukka Umunna, who suggests that the Chancellor is failing, and that wages are lower than when the Conservatives took office. The report concludes with live contribution from Economics Editor Richard Edgar, who refers to the aforementioned suggestions that the NMW causes unemployment:



*...the evidence is though, is that it (the minimum wage) has succeeded – the Resolution Foundation – a think tank - has collated scores of studies and found that in general, a minimum wage hasn't pushed people out of work...*

After this exchange, Julie Etchingham notes the timing of the Chancellor's announcement, and elaborates upon this during a live exchange with Chris Ship:



*... I think we've got to see this (the chancellor's approval) in terms of politics – it shows that the Tories don't want Labour to set the agenda on the cost of living as they did at the back end of last year, and it shows that gloves really are coming off ahead of the election...*

While the ITV1 report typifies the focus on pay, Figure 8.14 shows a BBC1 report on 19/8/14 which is indicative of a parallel focus on pay *and* the prices of various essentials. Reeta Chakrabarti introduces the story by explaining that rail fares may be increasing:

**Figure 8.14 BBC1's report about increasing rail fares on 19/8/14.**



*Figures out today suggest more pressure on people's pockets when it comes to house buying, or travelling by train, house prices hit a record high in the year to June, and commuters in England are facing an above inflation rise in ticket prices of at least 3.5% percent. But the rate of inflation fell by more than expected last month. What to make of this mixed economic picture? Here is our Business editor, Kamal Ahmed...*

Kamal Ahmed then begins his report:



*If you happen to travel to work by train, want to buy a house – or bad luck – both – today was not a good day... the cost of living is increasing as these commuters know...*

Rail passengers then contribute to the report:



*The price is already pretty exorbitant, so if it was to be any more expensive it would be quite crippling...*



*I think they are high enough – I wouldn't be able to afford it if it wasn't for my company paying for me...*

The report cuts to the Government Rail Minister, who suggests that ideally price increases would be less. Kamal Ahmed suggests that although inflation is falling, the cost of living is still “a challenge” for many. The report then cuts to some vox pops from Llandudno:





*Feeding a big family is quite expensive with day to day things going up, and wages aren't... so it's quite depressing really...*



*I can't complain, but I know there are people who are... suffering, especially the youngster and that... I'm one of the baby boomers, so...*

Kamal Ahmed continues the narrative, noting the reference to “baby boomers”, and using it to make the contrast with the 1970s:



*Baby boomers will remember a different era - the 1970s - when rampant inflation reached the heady highs of 20% - it caused demonstrations on the streets and governments to fall...*

Ahmed reports “mixed messages” about the economy; while inflation is at 1.6% and clothing and food are going down, house prices and travel costs are rising. The report cuts to an economist who speculates about when interest rates may change. Finally, Kamal Ahmed places the development within a wider political context:



*Next May we'll all be taking a journey to the polls in a general election – a rate rise just before that event may not be all that welcomed by the government...*

These two stories reflect how the focus on pay and prices dominated coverage of the squeezed middle. Indeed, the contribution by the mother in Llandudno sets increasing prices against stagnant wages, and functions as a microcosm for squeezed

middle reporting. On BBC1, one commuter's comments about "crippling" prices are exemplar of how coverage of "ordinary" people emphasises downsized lifestyles (see also Kendall 2012). However, by introducing a rhetorical contrast with the 1970s, Kamal Ahmed infers that contemporary affairs are much less serious.

The beginning of ITV1's report is characterised by expressions of dissent against the NMW, with suggestions - both by John Cridland of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and an employer (Leanna Hewitt) - that increasing it would cause unemployment. Hewitt indeed, proposes that making her guards unemployed is a real possibility, and Cridland emphasises the point by suggesting that the recovery is fragile, and that unemployment is likely. Public discourse is directed at "ordinary people" (Hanley 2009), reflecting their interests rather than those of investor communities (Shaw 2015). Further, any claims that the NMW causes unemployment are strongly refuted by Richard Edgar, who trumps anecdotal suggestions with evidence provided by "scores" of empirical studies. Once again, ITV1 are prepared to challenge private sector discourses, when BBC1 seem more reluctant to do so.

Figures 8.13 and 8.14 exemplify that within much of the economic discussion in 2014, there is a strong General Election framing, reflecting the close contemporary relationship between economy and state governance (Kenny 2012). Indeed, given that the austerity imposed by the Coalition Government was considered central to the 2015 election, the data presented here demonstrates that economic reporting is often coloured by strong party political themes. This is typified by Chis Choi's suggestion that "the gloves are coming off", and Kamal Ahmed's comment that interest rate changes might be strategically rejected by the Government as it positions itself ahead of polling day. The economy was clearly dominant within election coverage in 2015 (Cushion and Sambrook 2015a; Deacon et al. 2015), and the emphasis on process rather than policy (Aalberg et al. 2012) is also evident as party prospects are compared.

Figure 8.15 shows another example where the squeezed middle was featured as part of a BBC1 report about the economy on 29/4/14. Huw Edwards introduces the report by explaining that the U.K economy had grown for the fifth successive quarter. Chief economic correspondent Hugh Pym began his report thus:

**Figure 8.15** BBC1's report about economic growth on 29/4/14



*The British economy is revving up and world leading industries like this are playing an important role... Silverstone is at the heart of the so-called "Motorsport Valley" - 40,000 people are employed in hi-tech engineering businesses, and the local area has the highest employment rate in the country...*

Hugh Pym then explains that one particular company is growing quickly, and explains that there are expansion plans which are then confirmed by the firm's owner:



*There's a huge opportunity for growth – it's really the most exciting time in the automotive industry for 100 years...*

Pym then explains that one self-employed associate of the company is struggling financially:



*Renting is quite expensive and fuel is quite expensive... it's very slowly moving as far as I'm concerned...*

Pym then compares the U.K economy with other nations:



*The economy might be motoring along but getting back to where it was in 2008 before the recession is the key marker on the road towards a balanced and sustained recovery. The U.K's getting there, but is still 0.6% below that pre-recession peak. In contrast Germany has moved 3% beyond where it was in 2008, and the U.S economy is more than 6% above its previous peak...*

Pym quotes the Chancellor's verdict that this is good news, and features this soundbite:



*What these numbers today show is that Britain is coming back, but we can't take that for granted, we have to go on working through our long term economic plan and of course, families are still feeling the effect of the great recession but we do now see in place foundation for broad-based recovery.*

This report is typical of the economic growth stories described in Chapter 6, where the concept is presented as a fiscal panacea. Metaphor is used again, but this time visually as well as verbally; growth is expressed in terms of movement as it is likened to fast cars “revving up” and “motoring forward”.

Pym positions growth as a key marker of a “balanced and sustained recovery”. However, his report also presents a confusing growth-centred narrative; it is “the most exciting time in the automotive industry for 100 years” and yet insufficiently prosperous to ease the financial concerns of people like Nick. The U.K economy is growing, and yet it has neither returned to its pre-crisis levels, nor apparently compares to the growth rates of other economies, particularly the U.S and Germany. The confusion is amplified as growth is numerically suggested as slow, yet visually and verbally, it is aligned with power and speed, reminiscent of the regular use of sporting metaphors in EBF reporting (Butterick 2015; Joris et al. 2015).

While recovery is officially ratified by continuing growth, Nick in Figure 8.15, and most citizens featuring in Figure 8.14 are seemingly yet to experience it. Such inertia is reflective of the apparent failure of “trickle-down” economics, where wealth is intended to cascade from the top down (Atkinson 2014; Dorling 2014; Piketty 2014). A landscape where “not all boats rise equally” is therefore supported. Indeed, 46.4% of the other discourses within squeezed middle stories on BBC1, and 37.5% of those on ITV1 centred on whether there was a recovery or not.

A further consideration is that while showing a sustained five-month pattern, growth is still framed as uncertain and slow, justifying the cautious approach taken by the

Chancellor. Accordingly, BBC1 might be said to implicitly support these policies, showing that while austerity is working, it is still unfinished. The tentative recovery and contradictory narratives of prosperity and discomfort are reflected in the themes surrounding the squeezed middle (see Table 7.24), and qualitatively, within the reports shown in Figures 8.14 and 8.15. ITV1's report in Figure 8.16 about potential interest rate increases on 13/6/14 repeats this uncertainty, and exemplifies a wider preoccupation within housing costs. Of the images indexing the squeezed middle in 2014 for example, housing is prominent (22.7% on BBC1, 50.0% on ITV1). Anchor Charlene White's introduction explains how interest rate increases might affect homeowners:

**Figure 8.16** ITV1's report about potential interest rate increases on 13/6/14.



*Here the pound jumped to a five year high today amid hints that interest rates could rise by the end of the year, but financial experts have told ITV news that if the rates rise to just 3%, more than 2 million homeowners could be pushed over the edge. Our Consumer Editor Chris Choi has more...*

Chris Choi begins the report:



*With mortgage interests set to rise, City economists and dealers today were rewriting forecasts with predictions that rates will hit 3% within 3 years. It's all about cooling a vibrant property market but it's not the same everywhere...*

Chris Choi describes the situation in Scunthorpe, where semi-detached houses are available for as low as £50,000. He cites one mortgage payer as unhappy about paying more for his mortgage, even though house prices are decreasing:

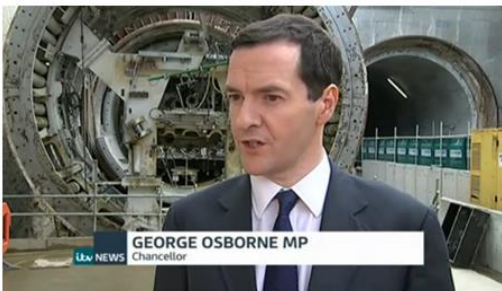




*I've got my property on the market at the minute, and have had 6 viewers, but as yet, no bids on the property. We keep hearing that the recession is finished, in London, but they want to come up to Scunthorpe...*



Choi's report shows George Osborne at a construction site, "building media profile for ideas to cool the market". The Chancellor contributes this soundbite:



*Inevitably interest rates will rise gradually, of course. When that happens is a decision for the independent central bank, but it is a signal that we are moving out of a period of economic crisis...*

The report cuts to an explanatory graphic with a voice over by Choi:



*With an average mortgage repayment at £530 per month, a 0.5% increase would see it reach £562, £32 up from today's rate... but some economists warn that 1.1 million mortgage payers are already financially stretched. They predicted rates of 3% - that will increase to 2.3 million households...*

The report cuts to Matthew Whittaker of the Resolution Foundation:



*For some families, they'll be able to ride that storm out, but it will mean a lot of belt tightening. But for some families, actually, they will have to exit the market – it will mean that in some way or another, they will have to leave housing...*

Choi concludes by reconfirming the uncertainty felt by mortgage customers. Once again, the general recovery claimed by the Chancellor is not reflected by homeowner Andy Munro, who can neither sell his house, nor feel any relief in terms of lower mortgage payments. Moreover, the discomfort experienced by ordinary people is enhanced with references to increased rates set to “push homeowners over the edge”, adding stress to those already “financially stretched”. Further, Matthew Whittaker’s contribution emphasises the importance of housing as the major contemporary economic issue (Dorling 2014; Butterick 2015), and that despite being the zenith of personal achievement, it is nonetheless elusive (O’Brien 2011; Niemietz 2012; Wardrip 2013; Whittaker 2013).

The organisation represented by Whittaker - the Resolution Foundation - was also quoted by Richard Edgar in his defence of the NMW (see Figure 8.13). The Resolution Foundation (2015) describe themselves as “a non-partisan and award-winning think-tank that works to improve the living standards of those in Britain on low to middle incomes”. Matthew Whittaker can therefore be assumed to promote the interests of the financially stretched, and makes the telling lexical choice of “families”, demonstrating that children share in the general discomfort.

In addition, by suggesting that some will “leave housing”, he invokes some sense of homelessness when in reality, many of those leaving housing would presumably move to rented accommodation (Cory 2013; Plunkett et al. 2014). The report in Figure 8.16 demonstrates the wide appeal, news value and resonance of the squeezed middle as it focuses on the impact on ordinary people. It shows how once again, ITV1 can often take a populist approach, promoting “ordinary” discourses (Hanley 2009), and that the strategic use of language is not the monopoly of powerful elites. Further, while EBF news might have become humanised and

increasingly features citizens, discomfort can be shown thematically, and statistics can still add narrative impact.

The nature of Hugh Pym's report about growth implicitly suggests that austerity is a reasonable neoliberal economic response to the crisis. There is further apparent support for free market principles within BBC1's report on 1/1/14 (shown in Figure 8.17), which describes Labour's plans to reform the rental market. The report continues the theme of housing, and begins with anchor Sophie Raworth describing Labour leader Ed Miliband's policy announcements during local and European election campaign launch:

**Figure 8.17** BBC1's report about rent reform on 1/05/14.



*The Labour leader Ed Miliband has promised to introduce limits to rent rises for tenants in the private sector if Labour win next year's general election... the Labour leader said tenants face terrible insecurity at the hands of private landlords. Our political editor Nick Robinson reports...*

Nick Robinson begins his report thus:



*When the landlord puts up your rent, it is yet another pressure on your finances. Pressure felt by the 4 million families whose homes are owned by private landlords...*



*Today with a fanfare to start Labour's election campaign Ed Miliband said he would intervene to limit the pain...*

Nick Robinson outlines Miliband's plan, which was to set a ceiling on the rate of increases. While this was supported by housing charities, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors did not agree with a cap. A private landlord contributes thus:





*This is the nanny state going too far... you can't buck the market, you're trying to stifle free enterprise and it just won't work...*

The report then includes two citizens apparently representing “generation rent” - those who rent as an immediate step before home ownership:



*Most people like myself who rent, and who don't really envisage wanting to stay in rental accommodation for the rest of their lives are finding it harder and harder to make that switch into buying their own home.*

Nick Robinson explains the history of rent control, before reminding viewers that only *increases* would be regulated, not the level at which rents are set to begin with. The report cuts to Ed Miliband, who explains that he wants to debate the cost of living crisis at the election. Robinson, on the campaign trail with the Labour leader, concludes the report:



*There's no plan to control the price of fish and chips, but the Labour leader believes his plan will take him from here to number 10.*

This report again confirms that squeezed middle reporting is invariably interwoven with political themes, as well as reflecting the intense focus on housing. This resonates with suggestions that economic news is usually articulated and understood within political frames (Puustinen et al. 2015). Further, it contains many of the images dominant in squeezed middle reporting, namely houses, and “For Sale” or “For Rent” signage. Strong lexical choices such as “pain”, “pressure” and “insecurity”

undoubtedly resonate with the audience; Nick Robinson suggests that four million families may be impacted and by implication, this is a large proportion of the electorate.

However, while it is claimed that charities might support the capping of rent increases, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors do not, and the disagreement from private landlords is summarised by a passionate defence from private landlord Andrew Wernick. His suggestions of “nanny state” action and the apparent attempt to stifle free enterprise are strongly indicative of deregulated markets and neoliberal ideology. The citizens supporting the suggestion that renting is difficult to escape could be viewed as hardly typifying discomfort. Both, for example, have sufficient discretionary income to afford gym membership.

While rent capping is undermined - albeit subtly - by these elements, Nick Robinson’s sign off further adds to the erosion. Playfully suggesting that there is no plan to cap the price of fish and chips might be a simple mechanism to link Miliband’s informal walkabout with the main story, but nonetheless “price control” in general is flippantly subverted. This may be unintended but is nonetheless detectable. Further, claims that BBC1 favours a government line to the detriment of the opposition is supported by suggestions that during the General Election 2015, U.K TV news generally marginalised Labour-preferred policies, while “the big winners of the media coverage were the Conservatives” as “coverage focused on their favoured issues” (Deacon et al. 2015, p.12; see also Cushion and Sambrook 2015a).

Coverage of the middle class squeeze is under researched (Champlin and Knoedler 2008), but empirical work that *does* exist finds discourses describing middle class fiddling and defrauding (McKendrick et al. 2008). Such discourses are absent in this particular project, and coverage is instead characterised by political/election framings and increased citizen participation. Further, there is greater willingness to discuss causality and a preoccupation with pay, and notably, housing costs invoke concepts of the *new* poor, who find paying mortgages increasingly difficult (Devereux 1998; Breen and Devereux 2003). Far from showing resentment to those “below” the middle classes (Mantsios 2005) and demonstrating middle class aspirations towards self-improvement (Champlin and Knoelder 2008), coverage simply emphasises discomfort. Furthermore, coverage constructs a rather confused and dichotomous

picture of the economy, suggesting recovery while at the same time heavily featuring those who appear to be suffering financial discomfort.

As large numbers are impacted, metrics and statistics remain important narrative builders. A satisfied middle class is seen as important for democracy (Bourguignon and Verdier 2000), and coverage of the squeezed middle reflects impact on ordinary people (Hanley 2009). However, while citizen stories are prominent, their interests are not privileged over those favouring commerce (Shaw 2015). Indeed, the neoliberal ethos of non-intervention - as indexed by the “nanny state” and the “stifling of free enterprise” - is once again supported. Any alternatives remain unidentified, absent, and unexplored. Furthermore, if the middle class are indeed portrayed as victims (see Mantsios 2005), they are apparently victims of wider economic circumstances which can be solved by the actions of governments or central institutions, rather than commercial organisations.

If, as has been mentioned, poverty, wealth and the squeezed middle are lived conditions, contrastingly, income inequality is a comparative measure of the gap between rich and poor (Schramm 2005; Wong et al. 2009). Income inequality is at the heart of this research project, and it is to this issue that the analysis turns.

### **8.7 Income inequality: sparse, embedded coverage, and solved by growth.**

Levels 1 and 2 Content Analyses enabled the analysis of wider news agendas, and EBF and PIE news more specifically. The increasing prominence of income inequality as a societal issue is indicated by an increase in academic study, various bestselling books and advocacy from the World Economic Forum (see Chapter 3). There has also been increased scrutiny of executive pay and the banking sector, and so it is surprising that the issue is reported less often within BBC1 and ITV1 10pm bulletins in 2014 than it was in 2007 (see Table 7.5). This is despite assertions by ITV1’s Michael Jermy that the channel *did* actually reflect the issue across news coverage, and that “if someone only watched ITV news, it was something that was discussed at various points”. Furthermore, income inequality is less often a substantive issue, and also less often accompanied by causes and consequences than it was in 2007.

In 2007, income inequality did not have the wider recognition and momentum as an issue of concern that it did in 2014. However, some focus on the issue is evident

within a story covered by both channels on 20/6/07. Both reports explain how senior figures within top U.K private equity firms had appeared before a Commons Select Committee to explain and justify their taxation arrangements. Figure 8.18 shows how ITV1 reported the story, introduced by anchor Mark Austin:

**Figure 8.18** ITV1 explains how MPs quizzed private equity bosses on 20/6/07.



*They make millions, own some of our most famous brands, and yet pay only 10% tax on their profits. Today, private equity bosses had to explain themselves to MPs. As political correspondent Libby Wiener reports, they denied they were get-rich-quick asset strippers, insisting private equity was a force for good...*

Reporter Libby Wiener explains that these “millionaires” own some of the U.K’s “biggest brands”, and that “controversially” they pay only 10% in tax for profits when the brands are resold. MPs, she continues, demanded that these private equity bosses explain themselves. After the main protagonists introduce themselves, Angela Eagle MP asks: “Are you proud that you’re paying less tax than your cleaners?” The report cuts to the response from one of the private equity bosses:



*I don't Miss Eagle, I pay 41% on my income tax, and I pay the relevant capital gains tax.*

Libby Wiener continues the report:



*Executives do pay the top 40% tax rate on their salaries, but most of their income comes from selling companies they invest in. If they've owned them for two years, the tax on the capital gains is just 10%. Known as taper relief, it was brought in by Gordon Brown. The businessmen say they're worth it.*

The report cuts to the response from another private equity boss:



*The industry has benefited from taper relief, the U.K economy has benefited from taper relief, but I think it is right to look at it again though...*

The report switches to some parliamentary footage, with Libby Wiener's narration explaining that the Liberal Democrats think the situation "indefensible":



*We're giving a tax break of £6 billion per annum to some of the wealthiest people in the United Kingdom. Would it not be much more fair to give tax cuts to lower and middle income families who've suffered most under this Government?*

Wiener comments that the equity bosses said little as they left parliament, and concludes:



*The fact that the private equity bosses were forced to appear to Westminster today is largely due to the persistence of the trade unions, who claim that many of these companies are simply asset strippers. The government doesn't see it that way, but the big test for Gordon Brown now is - does he offend his friends in the city, or does he continue to defend a tax regime that many of his critics say is blatantly unfair.*

Figure 8.19 shows how BBC1 addressed the story, as introduced by anchor Fiona Bruce:



**Figure 8.19 BBC1 explains how MPs quizzed private equity bosses on 20/6/07.**



*The leading players in the country's private equity firms have been forced to defend their battered reputation before MPs. There's a growing controversy over the low rate of tax paid in billion pound private equity deals. Some of the main players in the industry argued that their business is good for jobs and pensions. MPs accused them of colluding over their answers...*

The report cuts to an introduction by Robert Peston, who focuses specifically on “two of the main players” - Dominic Murphy and Damon Buffini. He describes them as “immensely wealthy partners of private equity firms which buy and sell whole companies”. He explains how they testified about their activities, and cuts to this exchange, which begins with a question from Sion Simon MP:



*Three years ago, nobody had heard of private equity, nobody had heard of you. Now you're both famous, and nobody likes either of you. What are you doing wrong?*

Damon Buffini replies accordingly:



*I don't think I'm doing anything wrong. I think we've got 30 million pension fund investors, we've delivered world class returns, I think myself and my partners have built one of the most successful financial services businesses in the world...*

The report switches to footage of a protest:



*So if private equity is such a great British success, what's all the fuss about? Well they pay a lower tax rate than cleaners – in the words of one private equity veteran - on the millions they pocket from their deals... which this cleaner isn't happy with...*

The report cuts to this contribution, apparently from a protester:



*The rich are becoming more richer and the poor are becoming more poorer, which is not fair!*

The report then returns to the hearing, and in identical footage to that used in the BBC1 report, Angela Eagle MP asks whether the man is proud to pay less tax than his cleaners. It elicits this familiar response:



*I don't Miss Eagle, I pay 41% on my income tax, and I pay the relevant capital gains tax.*

The MP suggests to another participant that he is proud to pay less tax than his cleaners, which elicits a reply that this is not the case. Peston explains that private equity bosses and the MPs might have come from “different planets”, and that the hearing had comprised of “a series of uncomfortable exchanges” with “barely a glimmer of comprehension on either side”. Meanwhile he says, the Treasury are reviewing these tax arrangements. Peston then introduces an interview against a London backdrop:



*...but this investments superstar who is worth a couple of hundred million quid or so has a warning as to what would happen if his industry believed it was being overtaxed...*



*The reality is that the people who the Treasury are really reviewing it about are those at the very top of private equity firms – the grandees who've benefited from the tax relief for the last 10 or 20 years, and they would just move abroad...*

Peston concludes:



*If the private equity stars depart these shores, there'd be a cost to Britain, so imposing fair taxes won't be easy...*

These reports are exemplar of the ways that BBC1 and ITV1 approach income inequality and other EBF issues. ITV1 are implicitly critical of the individuals involved, who are seen as taking advantage of the “tax loophole” clearly displayed on the explanatory graphic. Claims that the businessmen are “worth it” are not supported by any evidence, and a strongly critical contribution from Liberal Democrat leader Sir Menzies Campbell explicitly outlines the gulf between the rich and poor. His reference to taxation not only confirms this as a way to address inequality (Dorling 2014), but also suggests that tax avoidance should be legislated against (Giddens 2004) even though direct taxation on incomes and capital gains are generally unpopular, especially with high earners (Prasad 2008; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2012). In conclusion, Libby Wiener recognises the role played by trade unions, and that they can still challenge the legitimacy of free trade. This is despite the general decline of unions (Dreher and Gaston 2007) and their apparent disappearance from news (Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2013) detailed in Chapter



7. Indeed, Wiener suggests if it was not for trade union agitation, these equity bosses may not have been scrutinised at all.

When reports are analysed in parallel, despite many common elements in terms of content and format, BBC1 takes a different approach in terms of framing and tone. First, Fiona Bruce's introduction emphasises bosses colluding over answers more than anything more serious, and at an early stage, she introduces more specific benefits regarding jobs and pensions, coupling endeavour and success to wide societal benefits. The defence is developed by Damon Buffini, who refers to "30 million pension fund investors" which, by definition, might include many of those who watched this particular TV news report.

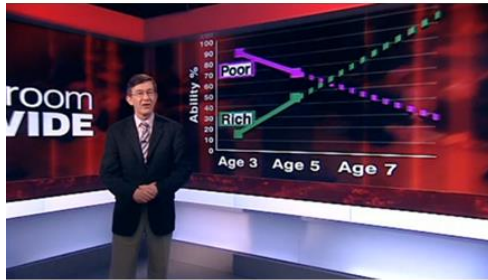
The images of protest are exemplar of a key populist reaction to inequality (see also Occupy London 2012; Luis-Ocando 2014), and confirm the prominence of protest revealed in Table 7.30. Further, protestor Anthony Seifah's contribution that while "the rich get richer, the poor get poorer" has become iconic shorthand for income inequality. BBC1 shares common footage with ITV1, but after referring to the testiness of the parliamentary exchanges, their report rather bolsters the defence of private equity firms. The "warning" from "investment superstar" Guy Hands is stark, and resonates with the justification offered by the financial sector actor in Figure 8.11; if taxation and salary regulations are too onerous, then equity firms will relocate, taking tax revenue and jobs with them. Robert Peston's coda confirms that more progressive taxation regimes are difficult to enforce, and his concluding remarks are that private equity firms leaving would "cost" Britain.

BBC1 again appear less critical of corporate affairs, and support the unfettered workings of the free market while ITV1 in contrast, are rather less supportive and refer to the trade unions being responsible for holding these figures to account. Neither report, however, places income inequality in any wider context of consequences and causes. In contrast, a BBC1 story from 13/12/07 does so to some degree, by examining the issue through the lens of social mobility. The story about how bright children from poor families fare worse than less bright children from richer families is shown in Figure 8.20. The story was introduced by Fiona Bruce:

**Figure 8.20 BBC1 discuss inequality and the educational divide on 13/12/07.**



*Britain is locked into a class divide and a raft of government policies over the last 30 years has done little to change things. A new study has found that by the age of 7, bright children from poor families will be overtaken by their richer, but less intelligent classmates. Nick Higham has been looking at the report.*



*Fiona – this research on 6 and 7 year olds shows that Britain's classroom divide is largely down to money. How much a child's parents earn has a big effect on however the youngest do at school. The brightest children from the poorest homes score very well on word tests at the age of 3, but they do much worse by the time they're 5. The least able children from the richest homes score poorly at 3, but then do better – so much better, that by the time they're 6 or 7, they will have overtaken even the brightest poor children.*

The report cuts to a teacher explaining the practical elements and implications of the disparity, suggesting, for example, that richer homes will have access to more books. Children are seen playing, and Higham explains that they will settle in the same social class as their parents. In a series of vox pops, several youngsters explain what jobs they would like to do when they are older. Higham further reports that the Government have attempted to help poorer children with initiatives such as extra tuition, but that it is too soon to determine the success of such measures. However, he says, the research on which the report is based “suggests something rather different”. A representative of the Sutton Trust claims that talent is being “wasted”. Finally, Higham signs off:



*What's alarming is that if the government's measures don't work, well, no-one else has any better ideas.*

Although the source of the report is unclear, it does establish the extent of the problem associated with social mobility. Higham simplifies the issue when he concludes that it is largely down to money. Logically, and far removed from normative models of “needs-blind” access to education (Giddens 2004), parents

educated to higher levels will have greater discretionary incomes and higher social capital; this report at least connects income inequality to the purported solution of education (see, inter alia, World of Work Report 2008; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2012; André et al. 2013).

However, Higham's coda, almost bereft of any hope, implies that only the Government has responsibility to solve the problem. Once again, if the private sector *does* have a role, such as improving the quality of work it provides (Prasad 2008; Standing 2011; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2012), then this is wholly overlooked. Social mobility, and by inference, income inequality, appears entirely the responsibility of the state, with the operations of capitalism wholly uninvolved. The report also notes that this problem has been present for 30 years; after all, it is the free-market principles of Thatcherism that are said to have driven U.K income inequality (see Chapter 3).

If this social mobility story had occurred within the U.S, the aspiration for self-improvement and social advancement is allied to the "American Dream" (McCall 2013). Within the U.S, income inequality has had considerable traction, given that it has been cited as a major social problem (Sutter 2013). Its compelling nature is indicated in the BBC1 report on 29/1/14 shown in Figure 8.21. It features an edited package by Washington Correspondent Nick Bryant, describing President Obama's State of the Union speech.

Notably and perhaps explaining the timing of the speech, it occurred only days after the WEF summit at Davos, where income inequality had been identified as a major global risk (World Economic Forum 2014). Nick Bryant's commentary accompanies footage of the President meeting ordinary people - those indeed, that the speech was "aimed at". Bryant suggests the speech was made against the backdrop of a "gridlocked" Presidency, where Obama's attempts at reform were hampered by the legislative process. The President, notes Bryant, was pledging to "by-pass the system". The report cuts to footage of the speech:

**Figure 8.21** BBC1's report on the State of the Union speech on 29/1/14.



*...America does not stand still and neither will I – so whenever and wherever I can take steps without legislation to expand opportunity for more American families, that's what I'm going to do...*

Bryant contextualises the speech more widely:



*...his overriding theme was the growing gap between rich and poor, of how the American dream could easily become an empty promise...*

The report cuts to the President's speech, pre-empted by Bryant's suggestion that the "American Dream" might be an "empty promise":



*...the cold hard fact is that even in the midst of recovery, too many Americans are working more than ever just to get by, let alone to get ahead...*

Bryant suggests that the proposed reforms are largely "bitesize" and lack substance. Republicans, explains Bryant, are critical, and a Congresswoman emphasises the point:



*The president talks a lot about income inequality, but the real gap we face today is one of opportunity inequality.*

The report cuts to people queuing for food handouts, and vox pop contributions from two citizens describing Obama's apparent powerlessness. Nick Bryant concludes:



*The truth is that the President is held captive by the broken politics in Washington, and that's unlikely to change for the three remaining years in office. It explains the discrepancy in his speech, between a big theme – the survival of the American Dream, and his small and piecemeal proposals. Time is fast running out for elegant words to be matched by deeds.*

It is clear that within the U.S, success is conceptualised as the “America Dream” (see, inter alia, Kumar 2005; Kendall 2012) where the spirit of capitalism is both relevant and worthy of reward. Congresswoman Rodgers confirms the theory, implying that while Americans can accept inequality of wealth, they are less tolerant about inequality of opportunity (Ladd and Bowman 1998). Moreover, this example suggests that any central narrative concerning income inequality appears overwhelmed by other issues (McCall 2013). Here, the legislative process is seen as hampering the President. Indeed, even those apparently disadvantaged by inequality are shown bemoaning the President's lack of agency rather than anything else. We are neither given any explanation of what causes income inequality, nor indeed, any explanation of its specific or general consequences.

One important concept within CDA is silence, or the omission of some discourses (Huckin 1997). Such exclusions can be as ideologically significant as those discourses that *are* mentioned. In TV news, such discourses are absent within social actor contributions in the first place, or are removed during editing. From the sound bite in Figure 8.21, Obama's words are reported thus:

*...the cold hard fact is that even in the midst of recovery, too many Americans are working more than ever just to get by, let alone to get ahead...*

The official transcription of the speech<sup>2</sup>, however, provides some context, and particularly what proceeds this particular sound bite:

*Today, after four years of economic growth, corporate profits and stock prices have rarely been higher, and those at the top have never done better. But average wages have barely budged. Inequality has deepened. Upward mobility has stalled. The cold, hard fact is that even in the midst of recovery, too many Americans are working more than ever just to get by, let alone get ahead...*

The extended version of the President's soundbite shows with considerably more compulsion that Americans have failed to see the benefits of recovery, and that despite sustained economic growth, inequality has increased. The inadequacy of economic growth by itself, and the failure of "trickle-down" economics is omitted by BBC1; the result is that the sanctity of economic growth is preserved.

In the same way that income inequality was not the central element in the report about the President's speech, other reports from 2014 - though very few - featured the issue more prominently. Two of these were broadcast around the time of the WEF summit at Davos in late January 2014, when inequality clearly had some momentum. Figure 8.22 shows that the BBC1 report on 23/1/14 was actually presented from Davos. It was introduced by Sophie Raworth:

**Figure 8.22 BBC1's report from Davos on 23/1/14.**



*They come, from all over the world, to the top of a magnificent Swiss mountain. The rich, the powerful – not to ski, but they say, to solve the world's problems. But in one sense, those problems don't seem quite as deep or severe as they have in recent years because there is a strengthening economic recovery, not only in Britain, but also in America, and much of the world.*

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<sup>2</sup> Transcript is available here: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obamas-2014-state-of-the-union-address-full-text/>



Robert Peston then interviews Prime Minister David Cameron, asking whether amid a period of genuine economic recovery, he thinks “we can have confidence that’s going to go on?” The Prime Minister responds:



*I think we can be confident, so long as we tackle the problems that led to the difficulties we had in the past. That means getting our budget deficits down, living within our means, mending broken banking systems, making sure recoveries are balanced...*

The report cuts to Robert Peston speaking directly to the camera:



*But as the billionaires and grandees sip their champagne and eat their canapés in Davos’ many lavish parties that take place in grand hotels like this one, there is one thing that they say profoundly troubles them, which is that as we enjoy this relatively strong global recovery, too many of the rewards, they say, are going to them, and not enough to poorer people.*



*This isn’t just about the cost of living rising faster than earnings in places like Britain; it’s about a longer running trend of a widening gap between the richest and the poorest all over the world - from China, to Africa, to America, and Britain.*

The report cuts back to the interview with David Cameron, and Peston asks when people might feel the benefits of the recovery:



*Well these things do take time, because we’re recovering from the longest and deepest recession in living memory. What is welcome is the recovery has come in jobs first, and we saw this week you know, the largest increase in employment in one quarter since records began, but we’re also cutting people’s taxes so we are seeing some positive signs in terms of take home pay, but it’s going to take time...*

The report cuts to another interview, when Peston invites viewers to “meet a new member of the Davos elite, the U.S. Treasury Secretary”. Peston asks for his assessment:



*There's you know, a lot of signs that there's, there's growth... but there's still a lot of risks out there and you know, I've just spent some time in Europe, meeting with some of my counterparts. I very much think that it would be in Europe's interests for there to be policies that really drove investment and demand in countries that are surplus countries...*

Peston concludes:



*The length and sustainability of the recovery matter to all of us, though probably slightly less to the super wealthy as they make their way home from this summit.*

After the generally upbeat opening announcing positive economic news, BBC1 indexes wealth with images of a helicopter arriving at a summit where income disparity was specifically identified as a serious global risk (World Economic Forum 2014). In his commentary however, Peston suggests that the world's problems do not seem “quite so deep or severe” given the signs of economic recovery. Moreover, his questioning again appears rather insipid, as he simply asks David Cameron to confirm that growth might continue.

Peston's use of “we” establishes group membership and commonality (Pennycock 1994; Krzyżanowski 2005) and implicitly suggests that everyone should have reason to look forward with confidence, that the recovery will benefit everyone, and that “trickle down” economics will work for all. Peston's piece to camera presents the faintly ridiculous notion of “billionaires and grandees” celebrating with champagne and canapés, but complaining that they get too large a share of the rewards of economic growth. His apparent flippancy undermines the seriousness of increasing inequality. While “demystification” of technical jargon and concepts can be a



successful strategy for EBF journalists (Butterick 2015), the trivialising of important issues also betrays their importance.

In the report in Figure 8.22, the link with growth is made by the U.S Treasury Secretary, who advocates “policies to drive investment and demand”. Growth, once again, is implicitly proposed as the cure-all. While wealth is indexed by helicopters, expensive watches and descriptions of lavishness, poverty is wholly absent. Moreover, Peston’s sign-off plays down the importance of income inequality, and gives an elite-driven take on the issue, suggesting that it matters less to the “super-wealthy”. A matter of days later, on 28/1/14, and as shown in Figure 8.23, ITV1 reported that in the midst of positive economic news, the Chancellor suggested austerity is not over. The report is introduced by anchor Mark Austin:

**Figure 8.23** ITV1 reporting the Chancellor’s claims on 28/1/14.



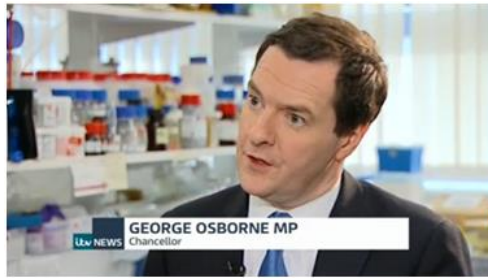
*The job is not yet done said the Chancellor today after welcoming the biggest yearly jump in the U.K’s output since the economic downturn began. Britain upped its production of goods and services by 1.9% last year, but in our ITV News index, nearly 3 out of 4 people believe the recovery is benefiting the rich more than the poor, and that debate led to some lively arguments in parliament as our Political Editor Tom Bradby reports.*

Tom Bradby continues the report:



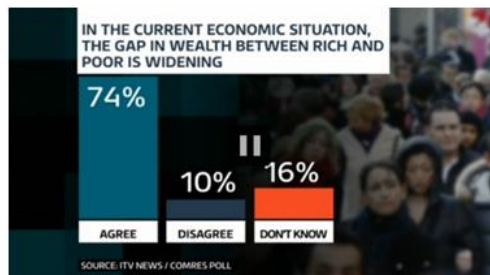
*The Tory playbook for the coming election was simple – nurse the economy back to health, make us all feel wealthier so we go out and vote for them. Simple. But nothing is ever easy and it seems that many of us fear that the recovery is ever only going to work for the wealthy. What isn’t in doubt though is that at long last, we are out of the economic woods.*

The report then features this soundbite from the Chancellor George Osborne:



*Growth is broadly balanced, with manufacturing growing faster than any other sector, and it is evidence that our long term economic plan is working but I'm the first to say that the job isn't done...*

In another soundbite, a construction industry manager suggests that confidence has returned, and tenders are plentiful. Bradby commentates over some graphics:



*But this is where it all gets a bit more politically complicated. An ITV news poll this week found that most people feel the wealth gap is widening – 74% asked agreed that it is – only 10% disagreed. And on whether economic growth has only really benefited the wealthy, 61% agreed, only 18% didn't.*

This is followed by an angry parliamentary exchange; Labour wish to restore top rate of tax to 50p, but the Chancellor claims that they have lost the economic argument. Ed Balls says while growth is welcome, for most it does not represent a recovery. The package is ended by Bradby thus:



*You're going to hear a lot more of this - the Tories focusing on the economy, the opposition, and to some extent the Lib Dems, on who benefit from it.*

The story itself is concluded with a live exchange between Austin and Bradby that examines the political positioning and strategy of each party, rather than the issue of the widening gap between rich and poor.

Growth is prominent in the ITV1 report, which is delivered within a strong political frame looking forward to the election. The question throughout is not whether there is a recovery, since it seems taken for granted that “we are out of the economic woods”, but the rate at which this will be felt by everyone (the rate of “trickle

down”). The language surrounding growth therefore, assumes that it will solve many problems; as revealed by CDA, some concepts, groups and ideas are presupposed, unexplained and taken for granted (Richardson 2007). Further, from the Chancellor’s words, it is clear that despite such growth, the “long term economic plan” of austerity must continue. The ability of “growth” to solve other social issues apparently associated with inequality is not discussed. Income inequality indeed, is shown to be *politically* complex rather than *socially* complex. In section 8.7, coverage of income inequality is strongly associated with politics, further reinforced by regular references to the General Election in 2015; Table 8.1 shows that most U.K-based stories containing references to income inequality in 2014 were framed in political terms:

**Table 8.1 Income inequality stories in 2014.**

Date	Channel	Length in secs	Story	Description
6/1/14	BBC1	488	More cuts if Conservatives win election.	Report outlines political choices between taxes and cuts but is mainly about political disagreements.
6/1/14	ITV1	280	More cuts if Conservatives win election.	Report outlines political choices between taxes and cuts but is mainly about political disagreements.
24/1/14	BBC1	206	ASDA - legal action over pay inequality.	Women working in stores campaign for equal pay with warehouse workers.
28/1/14	ITV1	269	Chancellor says “job not done yet”	See analysis.
10/3/14	BBC1	192	Labour will fund job scheme for unemployed.	Describes a scheme to boost unemployed by taxing bank bonuses
19/5/14	BBC1	27	Miliband to boost minimum wage to fight inequality.	See analysis.
27/5/14	BBC1	167	Governor of the Bank of England speaks about greed and inequality.	See analysis.
23/9/14	ITV1	227	Miliband speech - NHS to be boosted.	Labour’s taxation plans – main thrust was that the deficit was absent from his report.
26/9/14	BBC1	187	UKIP conference speech.	Appeal to Labour supporters – with plans to reduce tax for poorer people paid for by savings from leaving EU.
6/10/14	BBC1	165	Vince Cable criticises Tory budget.	Suggests increased taxation should replace austerity cuts.
7/10/14	BBC1	225	Clegg will bring tax cuts for low earners.	Speculation about new coalition, mainly about policy proposals and conference events
8/10/14	BBC1	280	Clegg speech at Lib Dem conference.	Advocates that taxing higher earners should replace austerity policies.
20/11/14	ITV1	140	Football - England women play Germany	How women’s sport generally has previously struggled compared to men’s sport.
3/12/14	ITV1	279	Prospects of cuts for pensioners and youngsters.	Report suggests that pensioners may now be hit with cuts after having easier ride. This is contrasted with younger people.

Table 8.1 demonstrates that party politics, and more specifically, the 2015 General Election, is the major platform, such as it is, for any discussion concerning income

inequality in 2014. Of the 14 stories<sup>3</sup>, only those about the Asda pay inequality, and the women's football are not obviously politically situated. These examples therefore, confirm that the central narrative of inequality may be lost amid other story frames (McCall 2013). In 2014, for example, the issue is overwhelmed by political and economic frames, meaning that the wider social implications of income inequality are unexplored. Explanations of both cause and consequence are notably less in 2014; perhaps without descriptions of both, the coverage might be said not to treat the issue with any great purpose and rigour.

This analysis concludes with the single story within this large sample which does, in fact, consider income inequality without deeply burying it within distracting economic or political frames. This story was run by BBC1 on 27/5/14, and is shown in Figure 8.24. It describes a speech by Mark Carney - the Governor of the Bank of England - who appeals for action over greed and inequality. The report was introduced by anchor Jane Hill:

**Figure 8.24 BBC1's report about Mark Carney's speech on 28/1/14.**



*The Governor of the Bank of England has criticised city greed, and has called for more to be done to tackle the problem of growing inequality. Mark Carney said that globalisation had resulted in huge earnings, which were amplifying the rewards of the superstar, while he said disturbing evidence suggested that opportunities for social mobility are narrowing. In the UK, income inequality is at levels not seen for 100 years. Here is our Business Editor, Kamal Ahmed.*

Kamal Ahmed begins his report:

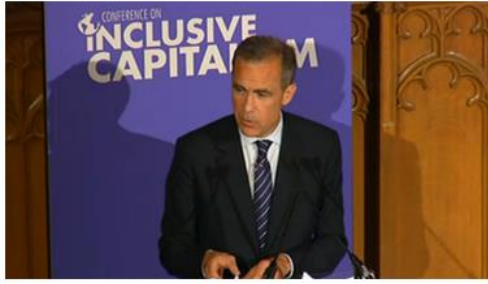


*Since the financial crisis of 2008, the question of growing inequality and the ability of capitalism to create for everybody has become the major debate. Mass layoffs and riots have punctured capitalism's pretty thick skin. Tonight, the Governor of the Bank of England argued that being famous or fortunate should not be the only route to success...*

The report then cuts to an excerpt from the Mark Carney's speech:

<sup>3</sup> This table refers to stories (which may include several items), rather than individual news items.





*When combined with the longer term pressures of globalisation and technology, on the basic social contract, an unstable dynamic of declining trust in the financial system and the growing exclusivity of capitalism threatens. In order to counter this, rebuilding social capital is paramount.*

The report cuts to a new scene, accompanied by Kamal Ahmed's commentary:



*Leading figures in the debate including Lady de Rothschild and Christine Lagarde say act now on inequality or risk the breakdown of democracy.*

This is followed by a short clip from a speech by Prince Charles:



*At the end of the day, the primary purpose of capitalism should surely be to serve the wider long-term interests and concerns of humanity rather than the other way around.*

Kamal Ahmed continues the report and refers to the Occupy protests in 2011:



*Here on the steps of St. Pauls, the anti-protest tents have been replaced by tourists, but business and economic leaders are still concerned that the anti-capitalism debate could turn into something far more ugly. They say there is a need for more action – they are talking about the redistribution of wealth.*

Ahmed then interviews Christine Lagarde from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who explains her preferred taxation strategy:



*Clearly those fiscal rules that are conducive to less inequality include the likes of tax on real estate, appropriate but not excessive tax on inheritance, appropriate and properly redistributive tax on income – not excessive – but appropriately progressive.*

Kamal Ahmed concludes the report with the following conclusion:



*She will be back in the U.K next month to publish the IMF's report on the U.K economy. It is likely she will raise the issue of Britain's soaring house prices, as well as the debate on inequality. If capitalism is to flourish, it is time for reform.*

In the anchor introduction, which so often sets the tone for what follows, Jane Hill not only establishes the magnitude of the problem (“levels not seen for 100 years”) but also gives some indication of causality (“globalisation”) and consequence (decreased “social mobility”). Kamal Ahmed adds to the list of consequences (riots), and links income inequality to the prevailing economic system in a way that is not evident elsewhere in other stories referring to income inequality. Indeed, his choice of the emotive term “punctured capitalism” infers that this is an ailing system.

Further, Mark Carney develops the themes of causality; these include globalisation and increased technology, both cited within income inequality research (see Chapter 3). However, Carney’s advocacy for “increasing social capital” is not explained and developed, and leaves an element of ambiguity; perhaps lay audiences might require a simple definition of the term. Indeed, Carney’s lexical choices are characteristic of deep, scholarly discussions rather than anything more accessible. Arguably this makes his rhetoric suited to an elite, learned audience, but less suited to those for whom “social capital” and “globalisation” are more difficult concepts to comprehend, especially since the latter has so many causal dimensions with regard to income inequality (see, inter alia, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011, 2012; United Nations 2012; Lee et al. 2013).

Ahmed suggests that the consequences of inequality threaten democracy, and that the issue is being considered by high-ranking elites. The clip from Prince Charles' speech, for example, resonates with the discussion of growth coverage carried out by Lewis and Thomas (2015). Their analysis includes another speech in which Prince Charles challenges "the dominant consumer capitalist consensus" (ibid p.95). Further, they remark upon the irony - coincidentally repeated here - that "the most critical voice" against capitalism was "a member of the British Royal Family" highlighting the absence of any such criticism from "economists, environmentalists, and social scientists" (ibid p.96). None of these potential contributors are as newsworthy as royalty, indicating, once again, the increased salience of news values within report construction and editing. Moreover, this single challenge comes from a public figure who has often been described as "eccentric" (Kennedy 2006; Hastings 2010; Taylor 2015), meaning perhaps, that its value is diminished.

Ahmed also introduces the theme of protest, notably evident in stories containing traces of income inequality in 2014, but it is the contribution of IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde that offers a potential solution to the problem of income inequality. She clearly proposes that more progressive regimes of taxation are key mechanisms to redistribute wealth (see Chapter 3). Moreover, Ahmed's statement that business and economic leaders *themselves* are advocating wealth redistribution appears a major advancement beyond earlier claims that such measures have sparse and decreasing support. This, indeed, is the only story where income inequality is treated seriously as a central and standalone issue, with attention paid to causes, solutions, and some glimpse of a challenge to prevailing capitalism. Finally, Ahmed's conclusion is unusual in that it appears to unequivocally advocate reform. It is the same topic covered by Robert Peston in Davos but is given added credibility perhaps, since Peston's "eccentricity" is not part of the report.

However, reasons for serious optimism may be unfounded. Ahmed's coda notes a future visit to Britain by Christine Lagarde, when income inequality apparently might be revisited. This would have potentially provided an opportunity to continue the cerebral narrative about inequality. However, the thrust of newspaper coverage of her visit the following month focused entirely on Lagarde's apology for underestimating the strength of the U.K's economic growth (see Armitstead 2014;

Inman 2014). Further, the set piece interview with BBC1's Andrew Marr on 8/6/14<sup>4</sup> does not mention income inequality at all. Instead it also focuses entirely on the issue of underestimated growth, as well as speculation that Ms. Lagarde may, in the future, consider becoming President of the European Commission. The inevitable conclusion is that while there is a small advancement in reporting income inequality, it is short lived, episodic and opportunistic.

### **8.8 PIE coverage: the summary.**

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that qualitative analysis of text and images used in reports containing references to PIE issues enhances quantitative investigation. It has shown that across the research sample, coverage of poverty for example, increasingly centres on the U.K, with food banks replacing famines as the main site for attention. While benefits are apparently failing to provide basic living standards, it is up to the state to address the issue, rather than the private sector and its free-market ethos.

Coverage of wealth, meanwhile, is characterised by episodic and specific instances of high salaries and bonuses, often gained through nefarious means. Rather than seriously addressing the validity of such wealth, coverage is often preoccupied with acquisition and high-level consumerism. ITV1 may take a more combative approach than the more anodyne BBC1, characterised by the apparent deference of some reporters, but the overarching model of free-market capitalism is never seriously challenged. Coverage of the squeezed middle incorporates the major theme of growth, pay, prices, inflation and interest rates. These reports are concerned with when economic recovery will be felt by the wider population, with an unspoken inference that this will represent a satisfactory conclusion to the temporary condition of being "squeezed".

Inequality has changed from being "one of the great debates", to Kamal Ahmed's evaluation that it is *now* "the major debate" (see Figure 8.24). Despite such an upgrading, income inequality is often lost within coverage because of competing narratives. Notwithstanding the evident loss of momentum in terms of coverage, this report indicates that it is possible to treat it as a free-standing issue, meriting more

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<sup>4</sup> The full transcript of this interview is at:  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/0806201402.pdf>



cerebral journalistic approaches. Against supposed normative ideals of income inequality coverage, it could be judged that any traction generated by the report is soon lost. After all, the report in Figure 8.24 was triggered by a significant speech by Mark Carney; whether BBC1 would have reported income inequality otherwise is a moot point.

Chapter 9 now addresses the wider issues emerging from this analysis; specifically, the current and likely future landscapes of TV news, and their ability to accurately and helpfully report EBF news. More specifically, it addresses the wider themes within PIE coverage considered as part of an evaluation as to whether operationally and ideologically, audiences can be adequately served by the coverage of such issues provided by the U.K's two most trusted news channels.

## **Chapter 9. BBC1 and ITV1: Natural homes to social justice, or to the status quo of capitalism?**

Previous chapters find that BBC1 and ITV1 do not generally provide critical coverage of EBF and PIE issues in their weeknight 10pm news bulletins. This chapter considers the reasons for this paucity and the wider implications. It draws together findings from chapters 5-8, and provides the master narrative developed from this project.

Ahead of the discussion about PIE issue coverage, on a superficial level at least, the U.K TV news landscape, as represented here by BBC and ITV, apparently provides what should be a fertile home for the reporting of serious news and topics associated with social justice. Hard news is increasing, and issues of social importance are generally covered within longer news conventions that provide an opportunity to furnish greater detail. Furthermore, the financial crisis has changed the ways that EBF news is reported; it is more prominent within wider news agendas and features more citizens and human-centred reporting. Finally, ITV1 demonstrate a greater willingness to challenge big business than might have been reasonably expected, and therefore the channel can be said to more closely meet the normative ideals of probing, insightful journalism.

However, these apparently positive findings are problematic. The increasing homogeneity between channels for example, can be interpreted as a reduction in choice and variety. Perhaps more importantly, while there is more EBF coverage as part of the wider increase in hard news, this might only be because reports accentuate the more salacious story elements, and do not sufficiently investigate causes and consequences. Furthermore, while citizens are used more often in news reporting, their interventions do not seriously challenge elite discourses. Finally, ITV's willingness to take a more combative approach to corporate affairs is encouraging, but the comparison with the BBC also serves to accentuate the indolence shown by the nation's primary public service broadcaster.

Alongside these less encouraging elements, the quality and quantity of EBF and PIE issue reporting is found to be unsatisfactory. Economic growth is championed without alternative, alternatives to traditional capitalism are absent, and the overarching system of neoliberal economics remains unchallenged, despite

widespread concerns that the system has failed so many people. While the first part of this chapter describes and discusses these deficiencies, a critical realist approach to research seeks to explain, drawing upon the particular structures, mechanisms and influences in operation. The second part of this chapter therefore, explains why EBF and PIE reporting is as it is, and why there so little TV coverage of income inequality when the phenomenon has gained so much momentum elsewhere.

### **9.1 Increasingly homogeneity: masking a lack of serious coverage?**

Quantitative and qualitative analysis demonstrate the increasing convergence of ITV1 and BBC1 10pm news bulletins. The balance of content and categories is also congruent, as is a general increase in EBF coverage. ITV1 had dropped its market summary convention by 2014, enhancing the overall similarity between channels, and both ITV1 and BBC1 have changed EBF reporting news into a softer, more anthropocentric discipline.

The convergence of BBC1 and ITV1 news follows new institutional theory where “politics and rituals” within many realms - “including mass media” - operate with increasing isomorphism (Clausen 2003, p.33). DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) model of institutional isomorphism offers three pertinent mechanisms. First, under *coercive* isomorphism, “formal and informal” external pressures including official mandate (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p.150) force organisations into conforming to a given standard. Here, the benchmark could be the varying public service mandates both channels must adhere to. Secondly, according to *mimetic processes*, when organisational goals are unclear or problematic, organisations may model themselves on others (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p.151). Despite both bulletins “hunting the same mass audience” (Wallis and Baran 1990, p.55), ITV1’s 10pm news consistently attracts fewer viewers than BBC1’s simultaneous bulletin (Cushion 2012; Mosey 2016), and so is it possible that ITV1 have followed BBC1’s traditionally harder agenda in order to more seriously compete. Notably, and adding further to the points of convergence, in late 2015, ITV1’s 10pm bulletin changed from a dual to a single presenter (ITV 2015). A targeted attempt to mimic the BBC’s “gold standard” of reporting (Machin 2008, p.60) is hinted at by Head of ITV News and Current Affairs Michael Jermy, who claims there is a conscious effort to enhance the quality of ITV1’s journalism:

*Over the last few years we have had a strategy to invest in journalism on ITV... roles like Penny Marshall, our social affairs editor, our excellent political editor Tom Bradby, and in business and economics where we employed in around 2012, top business and economic editors in Richard Edgar who came from the Financial Times, Laura Kuenssberg who came from the BBC (and has since gone back), and we replaced Laura with Joel Hills who has a great track record in business reporting... (interview on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015)*

Finally, according to *normative pressures*, professionals within different organisations have similar roles, objectives and institutional influences (Dimaggio and Powell 1983). Indeed, and as Jerney points out, there is evidence of inter channel migration. For example, two journalists prominent within this research (Nick Robinson and Laura Kuenssberg) have held editorial roles at both channels. Also, Penny Marshall moved from ITV to BBC and back again within 2014, political reporter Allegra Stratton moved from BBC to ITV at the end of 2015, and even more pertinently, Robert Peston also moved from BBC to ITV at around the same time. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that as well as the onscreen similarities already documented, elements of education, on-the-job learning and “acquiescence to convention” (Dimaggio and Powell 2012, p.10) are other factors driving convergence.

However, despite interpreting the shift to harder news as a positive move benefiting viewers since they are delivered more news about weightier issues, inter-channel convergence in terms of convention and content may generate concerns about a lack of plurality. Moreover, while “few would dispute that homogeneity of content across outlets is a threat to pluralist understandings of media and politics” (Chadwick 2011, p.39), this increasing homogeneity explains little about the coverage of EBF and PIE issues. In this regard, perhaps the more compelling concern associated with the increasing similarity between BBC1 and ITV1 is that an increase in hard news content does not necessarily mean that the quality of the news presentation also increases.

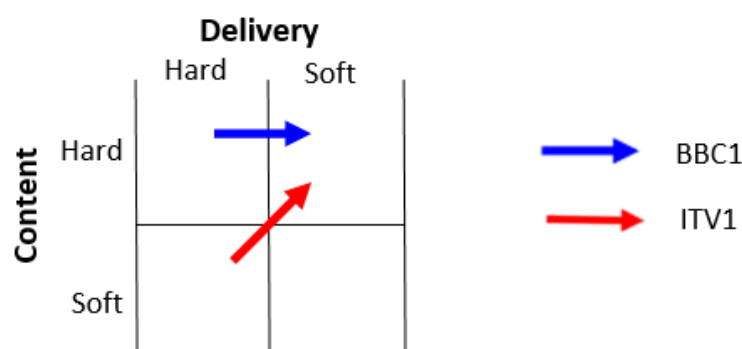
EBF and PIE stories contain elements of drama and emotion (Underwood 1998; Allern 2002; Meyer 2003) and the monetary sums often involved further contribute to making stories “sexy” (Butterick 2015, p.121). Such stories inevitably appear more interesting to wider audiences, and as was shown in Chapters 6 and 8, news reports often highlight characteristics such as negativity, shock, drama, criminality, excess,

morality and conflict. While audiences might find these more attractive, such emphasised story elements are not likely to foster cerebral, serious coverage.

In practice, these attractive elements include customers queuing outside Northern Rock, a ready supply of “villains” (Schifferes and Knowles 2015) and “entertainment and intellectual fizz” (Lambert 1998, p.x). The attraction of the new type of EBF news, and the validation of news values as a relevant critical lens is implicit within the words of Michael Wilson, SKY’s TV Business and Economics editor at the beginning of the financial crisis. Such extraordinary events he claimed, benefited TV news, since they were happening “not in a banana republic but in a leading industrialised country whose administration had been selling the ‘financial stability’ story for 10 years”. The action he reflects, was happening “in a town near you” and had “marched right in through the front door, to you and your family” (Wilson 2008, p.61).

TV news therefore, developed and humanised previously complex (and perhaps uninteresting) EBF stories. As a consequence, such reporting, however, is sometimes “light” and “knockabout”, and examples include the simplified and trivialised presentation of the Northern Rock bail out (Figure 6.14), the WEF forum at Davos (Figure 8.22), and the personality-fuelled style of contributors such as Robert Peston (see Section 6.6). Although news has become harder in terms of content, there must be legitimate concerns that its presentation has also become dumbed down, and that “traditional” approaches to news are undermined by newer ones (Thussu 2008, p.5) where audiences are entertained rather than informed (see, inter alia, Jensen 1979; Franklin 1997; Doyle, 2007). Accordingly, the quantitative findings from Chapter 5 and qualitative findings from Chapters 6 and 8 can be synthesised into the shifts in channel content and presentation shown in Figure 9.1:

**Figure 9.1 The changes in news content and delivery from 2007 to 2014.**



The counter argument that more populist presentations engage wider audiences (Temple 2006; Langer 1998) is attenuated by the nature of what is being reported. The proliferation of squeezed middle stories for example, resonates with claims that ordinary people are increasingly keen to know more about their financial affairs (Schifferes 2011). In other words, many EBF stories are already compelling, and do not require simplification.

However, despite such innate appeal, there is a general reluctance within PIE reporting to articulate causes and consequences (see Chapter 7). In emphasising personality, sensationalism and conflict, the wider social, economic, or political implications are marginalised (Callaghan and Schnell 2001), and coverage, as a result, is often superficial. While news is presented with less gravitas, and drama is preferred to significance and consequence, it must be concluded that obligations to serve the public are not fully met. In sum, while humanising EBF news extends appeal and interest beyond narrow, elite and specialist audiences, the process of attending to human stories by itself, does not guarantee coverage that might engage the public and policymakers on a more serious level.

## **9.2 The humanisation of EBF news: does “City” now compete with “citizen”?**

Technological advances have increased the volume and availability of EBF information to audiences increasingly keen to receive it (Schifferes 2011). Such news is often complex (see, inter alia, Doyle 2007; Davis 2015; Schifferes 2015), and interpretive intervention might be useful for citizens attempting to understand the new information (Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2013). One normative function of EBF journalists therefore, is to decipher and simplify (Seymour 2009).

As demonstrated by the Northern Rock case study (see Chapter 6), EBF news reporting has considerable impact. In line with normative ideals, news reporting should be critical, objective and sufficiently probing (see inter alia, Kovach and Rosentiel 2007; Starkman 2014; Butterick 2015; Tambini 2015). As has been discussed, both bulletins increased their volumes of EBF news coverage, and also during the research period, ITV1 abandoned their statistically-driven market/currency summary. As the crisis generated stories about high salaries and the squeezed living standards of millions of ordinary people, EBF news became humanised. According to Michael Jermy for example, ITV1’s budget coverage in

2015 covered “business and economic sides of things, but also the social impact on the squeezed middle and the poor” (interview on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015). It is difficult to contest that within the sample, EBF news shifted from “Wall Street” to “Main Street” (Joutsenvirta 2013, p.474), and by virtue of citizens appearing onscreen more regularly, official voices were being increasingly replaced by ordinary ones.

If the roles and prominence of various social actors were destabilized by the financial crisis (Joutsenvirta 2013), the prominence of citizen contributions potentially challenges some established theories pertinent to EBF reporting. Indeed, it is tempting to recast social actors according to a well-established model whereby perpetrators (including say, bankers) are villains, the journalists drawing attention to them are heroes, suffering citizens are victims, and events surrounding them are interpreted by experts (Cook et al. 1983). Table 9.1 shows the total of social actors identified within Level 2 Content Analysis, and demonstrates that citizen contributions consistently dominate PIE reports on BBC1 and ITV1 in both 2007 and 2014. Business voices however, are less prominent<sup>1</sup> among the range of social actors quoted throughout PIE coverage:

**Table 9.1 Breakdown of social actors in PIE coverage (by percentage).**

	<b>2007</b>		<b>2014</b>	
	<b>BBC1</b>	<b>ITV1</b>	<b>BBC1</b>	<b>ITV1</b>
<b>Total number of social actors quoted</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>131</b>
Citizens/ citizen polls	39.5	34.3	41.4	34.4
Politicians	16.5	22.9	27.8	31.3
Business people (including financial sector)	13.2	17.1	11.2	11.5
Academics, economists, religious, legal or other experts	7.7	17.1	5.9	9.9
Campaigners, charities and think tanks	11.0	2.9	2.4	5.3
Government departments, NGOs and public sector (including Bank of England, medical and military)	5.5	2.9	5.9	4.6
Celebrities, criminals and others	5.5	2.9	2.4	1.5
Trade unions	1.1		3.0	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

<sup>1</sup> In their large scale content analysis, Wahl-Jorgensen et al. (2013) found business actors amounted to 11.1 % of the total sources on the BBC, virtually identical to the 11.2% in the 2014 data herein.

The theory of mediatization posits that journalists take centre stage within news reporting (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999), reflecting the “accrual of power created by the increased pervasiveness and autonomy of media institutions, values and technologies” (Deacon and Staney 2014, p.1033). Operationally, this means that journalists interpret the words and opinions of others (see, inter alia, Cushion and Thomas 2013; Cushion 2015). There are fundamental concerns about mediatization’s legitimacy (see Deacon and Staney 2014), but nevertheless in its simplest form, the theory challenges established ideas about how news is shaped by elite sources, particularly within EBF reporting (see, inter alia, Arrese and Vara 2015; Picard and Salgado 2015; Puustinen et al. 2015).

Superficially, the increased citizen involvement demonstrated in Table 9.1 is at odds with findings that elite commercial voices are an informational default dominating EBF news reports (see Berry 2012). The increase in citizen voices has contributed to the increase, albeit marginal, in episodically framed reports covering all PIE issues apart from in the case of income inequality (see Table 7.3). In sum, if EBF news has moved from “Wall Street” to “Main Street”, then the demographic of those contributing to reports has also moved, from “City” to “citizen”, with the coverage focusing on “middle street”.

If citizen participation is considered in terms of quantity *and* quality, while the greater involvement of citizens seems clear from Table 9.1, the quality (measured in terms of usefulness to the audience) is less certain, since after all, when ordinary people are permitted to contribute, editorial control is still retained by the media (Robinson et al. 2009).

Indeed, despite their increased prominence in terms of frequency, citizens appear to have little agency. First their interventions often simply support the overarching narratives developed by journalists, for example confirming an injection of cash into the economy in the wake of mass PPI refunds (6.29), the threat of job losses if the NMW was increased (Figure 8.13), an increasingly widespread reliance on foodbanks (Figures 8.6 and 8.7), and the difficulty of escaping the rental market (Figure 8.17).

Furthermore, when citizens *are* shown giving opposing viewpoints, their interventions simply serve to demonstrate that some issues are contentious, such as



the merits of bonuses for bank executives (Figure 8.11), the impact of increased rail fares (Figure 8.14) and the widespread nature of economic recovery (Figure 8.15). Finally, citizen interventions can also simply enhance the light, “knockabout” nature of coverage, such as the collapse of Northern Rock (Figure 6.14).

The comparatively low impact of citizen contributions is further confirmed by their length. The examples in Chapters 6 and 8 demonstrate that when citizens are featured, their opinions and comments are presented in the form of brief, edited soundbites, consistent with research findings showing that other social actors such as politicians are granted considerably more onscreen time than citizens (see Cushion and Sambrook 2015b; Cushion et al. 2015). In sum, it is difficult to contest that despite any increased frequency in citizen appearances, “this does not necessarily mean that they frame public debate or provide new perspectives on political issues” (Wahl-Jorgensen 2013, p.17).

### **9.3 Refining homogeneity: ITV1’s different approach.**

As has been discussed, quantitative and qualitative analysis demonstrate that BBC1 and ITV1 are similar in the news they present, and in the formats and contributors they use to do so. However, analysis also reveals points of difference regarding the tone and general approach to EBF and PIE issues. Such additional insight validates a mixed methods research approach, and the addition of qualitative analysis following quantification (see also Cushion et al. 2015). Lawson (2015b) recognises the similarity between how BBC1 and ITV1 select their stories, but also cites “tonal differences” between “the two Tens”. The “usual view” is that the BBC is “more analytical and internationalist”, while ITV is more “popular and jolly” (Lawson 2015b). Based on this research data, such a “usual view” can be challenged.

EBF and PIE reports on BBC1 for example, are often characterised by a lack of probing questioning (Figures 6.17 and 6.18), and the implicit defence (or at least, a lack of critique) of the banking and private equity sectors (for example Figures 6.27, 6.29, and 6.30). These examples add weight to arguments that the BBC adheres to “an establishment view” (Hargreaves and Thomas 2002, p.6), rather than putting the interests of the public first, as per the reasonable expectations of a public service broadcaster. Furthermore, implying that BBC1 take an increasingly light approach,

and reminiscent of how fast cars were used to index growth (Figure 8.15), Lawson (2015a) refers to another report by BBC1's Robert Peston, which includes "artily filmed footage" of a "seaside big dipper" also used to represent growth. "Such metaphorical flourishes - visually lavish but often simplistic in content" claims Lawson, are "a BBC news signature". While ITV correspondents deliver their reports in "fairly straight" ways, the BBC aim more for "operatic notes of tragedy... and comedy"; "the reporter as performer" more logically expected on ITV is "more likely to be found on the other side" (Lawson 2015a). Such an interpretation is consistent with the earlier argument that as part of the general thesis of humanisation, Robert Peston incorporates such elements of "performance" within his BBC1 reporting. This research data therefore, shows no support for traditional understandings that the BBC will take a more sober, serious approach to news than its main commercial rival.

Data concerning ITV1, on the other hand, reveals an unexpected finding versus the expectations according to its critical political economy, in that there is no evidence indicating that the channel takes a deferential approach to its commercial sponsors (see also Thomas 2016). Furthermore, the Barclays case study offers sustained evidence that instead, ITV1 often takes an overtly critical view of a commercial organisation in the full knowledge that the company in question has paid for advertising to be screened during the very news bulletins carrying those critical reports.

ITV1's more challenging approach incorporates asking questions and adding commentary, and is unexpected on a commercial station. Accordingly, while BBC1 might be described as providing news for business people and the establishment, ITV1 represents "the people's news" (Brown 2000; Barnett 2012, p.70). Examples of how ITV1 adopt a "people's view" include the defence of the NMW (Figure 8.13), and a recognition of the efficacy of trade union activism (Figure 8.18). Michael Jerney supports such a notion, claiming that "people have always been at the heart of ITV news, and we think we are good at telling stories from a people's perspective", also noting that "we're on a channel that used to be called 'The People's Channel'" (interview on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015).

The analysis in Chapters 6 and 8 justifies a challenge to the clean functioning of the theory of critical political economy, since by featuring news discourses often serving

“the people”, ITV1 put aside commercial logics and corporate influence, resulting in more incisive, effective reporting (see also Mosey 2016). BBC1 on the other hand, often defer to elite opinions, and take a more conservative line when reporting corporate affairs. The often stark contrast with ITV1’s approach only serves to highlight the deficiencies in the ways that the nation’s primary public service broadcaster reports EBF and PIE issues. The reasons for the BBC’s more cautious approach can be expressed in both political and contextual terms, and these are discussed in section 9.8.

#### **9.4 PIE coverage: more similarity, and the resilience of political economy.**

Analysis shows that the trend of inter-channel homogeneity is largely mirrored in coverage of PIE issues. Superficially, early conclusions were encouraging from a normative viewpoint since PIE issues were generally presented thematically, and were generally found within hard news categories and edited packages providing the greatest opportunities for serious, cerebral coverage.

However, poverty coverage in 2007 - generally international - often demonstrates close adherence to traditional models of poverty reporting, where the issue appears aestheticized and sensationalised. In 2014, coverage focused more on the U.K, addressed new forms of poverty, and featured more episodic framings which lacked context but allowed for more personal narratives. Furthermore, despite extant research proposing otherwise, individualistic causes of poverty were less evident than systemic causes.

In 2014, PIE coverage on both channels was dominated by the squeezed middle. However, there was less coverage of income inequality despite notable increases in policymaker recognition (World Economic Forum 2014, 2015), more scholarly attention (see for example Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Dorling 2014; Piketty 2014; Atkinson 2015), and suggestions that it was becoming “one of the great debates of our age” (see Figure 6.16). Indeed, within the research sample of 9,338 news stories, income inequality was usually obscured by political framings. There was only one *serious* example of critical coverage, and any connections to social and personal consequences were almost wholly absent. The conclusion that there is no correlation between increasing income inequality and its media coverage (McCall 2013) is

difficult to resist; there was less coverage in 2014, it was less substantive within the reports featuring it, and these reports contained less commentary about cause and effect.

By way of background, and unlike U.K TV channels, newspapers are not obliged to provide news impartially, and can overtly align themselves with the political ideology of their choosing. “Quality”, or broadsheet newspapers are those most likely to cover such a social issue, and Table 9.2 shows the number of articles containing the term “income inequality” within the print versions of U.K broadsheets in 2013, 2014, 2015, and the first half of 2016.

**Table 9.2 The use of “income inequality” in UK broadsheets (by percentage).**

	2013	2014	2015	2016 (until end of June)
<b>n = total articles containing “income inequality”</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>533</b>
<i>Guardian / Observer</i>	42.4	49.1	56.3	78.8
<i>Independent / IOS</i>	26.7	22.3	22.0	17.4
<i>Times / Sunday Times</i>	24.1	21.9	18.3	6.2
<i>Telegraph / Sunday Telegraph</i>	6.8	6.7	3.5	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>	<b>≈100</b>

Table 9.2 shows that in stark contrast to the analysis of broadcast news coverage, income inequality has become increasingly discussed in printed broadsheets. However, this increase is almost entirely driven by the coverage provided by publications allied to the political left. In 2013, the *Guardian/Observer* mentioned “income inequality” around six times more often than the *Telegraph*, a competitor allied to the political right, and whose owners have extensive business interests. By the midpoint of 2016 however, the *Guardian/Observer* mentioned the phrase over 80 times as much than the *Telegraph*, and is entirely dominant in income inequality coverage.

Of the broadsheet titles, only the *Guardian* has an ownership model whose profits “do not benefit a proprietor or shareholders” (Guardian 2015). Such governance means that “normal” profit-driven tensions (Forgan 2011) are avoided. Such an apparently independent position without an imperative to provide profit for

shareholders and promoting “liberal journalism” (Guardian 2015) means the newspaper might take a different view to its competitors. This comparison serves to illustrate that the theory of critical political economy seems to *straightforwardly* explain how U.K. broadsheets cover income inequality. In short, where there is a need to generate value for owners and shareholders, capitalism and commercialism are the dominant codes, and income inequality is marginalised.

In 2014, however, albeit to different degrees, the critical political economy of ITV1 at least can be challenged, since organisations and people are increasingly scrutinised. Overall however, the theory prevails within TV news, since both BBC1 and ITV1 ultimately defer to neoliberal thinking, seemingly following the right of centre/market-driven agenda evident in the *Times* and *Telegraph*, rather than the more centre/left thinking promoted by the *Guardian*.

This adherence to neoliberal thinking can be demonstrated by the ways in which both channels articulate consumerism without consequence, the ways that they relentlessly champion economic growth, and the ways that they both generally promote neoliberal economic ideology. Each of these is now considered in turn.

### **9.5 Articulations of consumption without consequence.**

While coverage of wealth highlights the illegal and/or immoral ways it was accumulated (see Chapter 6), there was also continuing interest in the specific details of consumerism. Examples include Conrad Black’s lifestyle (Figures 8.8 and 8.9), the spending power provided by bank bonuses (Figure 8.11) and the possibilities provided by the huge wages paid to footballers (Figure 8.12). Indeed, in Figure 8.12, how such wealth might be spent is cited as the “one big question”. Logically, increased output of goods and services (growth) is only sustained by continuing demand. Relentless consumption is fuelled by advertising, in turn described as society’s “dominant cultural industry” (Lewis 2013a, p.63).

Heinberg (2011) warns against “a dream world” where “growth knows no bounds, where debt can be repaid with more debt, and where natural resources are assumed to be endless”. The exclusively positive nature of growth, and the ongoing demand and consumption that fuels it are established media discourses (e.g. Lewis and

Thomas 2015) despite this being “in defiance of both common sense and ecological knowledge” (Duane 1999, p.250). Assumptions of a correlation between growth and environmental harm is challenged by the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis. Maturing economies experience “industrialization” from agriculture to industry and then “postindustrialization” from industry to service (Soubotina and Sheram 2000), with the latter becoming dominant (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2000). The EKC model claims that environmental impacts change as economies mature; as agriculture gives way to industry, pollution and degradation increase. As populations become wealthier however, environmental care becomes both more affordable, and public pressure drives policymaking (Galeotti 2007; Burnett and Bergstrom 2010). Thereafter, as industrial economies morph into service economies, environmental damage decreases. Accordingly, it is claimed that growth is not environmentally harmful.

The far more compelling argument however, is that “the more we grow, certainly using current economic thinking, the more resources we need to use and the more pollution we create” (Maxton 2015). Consequently, even aside from considerable empirical evidence challenging it (see Stern 2004 for a full summary), the EKC hypothesis appears inadequate amid the more compelling rationale of environmental degradation and a decline in non-renewable resources (Figueroa 2013) to the point where reversal is impossible (see Lewis 2013a for a full summary). Indeed, in 2011, Fatih Birol (Chief Economist at the International Energy Agency) warned that this point of no return was imminent, and expressed concern that “if we don't change direction now on how we use energy, we will end up beyond what scientists tell us is the minimum [for safety]. The door will be closed forever” (Harvey 2011).

Indeed, global carbon emission levels have increased by 117% since 1971 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2013) and in 2015, when carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached 400 parts per million (ppm), climate change scientists stated that:

*...values are more than 100 ppm higher than at any time in the last one million years and maybe higher than any time in the last 25 million years*  
(Dr. Charles Miller cited in NASA 2016)

*... climate change is a threat to life on Earth and we can no longer afford to be spectators* (Dr Erika Podest, cited in NASA 2016)

Further, former NASA climatologist James Hansen envisaged “that conflicts arising from forced migrations and economic collapse might make the planet ungovernable, threatening the fabric of civilization” (Hansen et al. 2015, p. 20119). This research data from 2007 and 2014 supports notions that relentless consumerism is unchallenged on BBC1 and ITV1, while its environmental impact is marginalised. Indeed, news about the environment almost disappeared altogether during the seven-year span of the sample, declining from 2.5% (ITV1) and 1.6% (BBC1) of total airtime in 2007 to respectively 0.2% and 0.3% in 2014<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, the environment was previously the 15<sup>th</sup> most prominent category out of 32 in 2007, but had fallen to 31<sup>st</sup> position by 2014 (See Table 5.5).

Such findings support research by Dando (2014), and by Lewis and Thomas (2015), whose study found only one article that substantively linked growth to stalling wellbeing and environmental degradation out of 591 newspaper articles mentioning “economic growth”. In sum, society has created “a dysfunctional economic system that, when it works according to its self-imposed mandate of growing the pace of production and consumption, destroys the ecological systems upon which it depends” (Prádanos 2015). There appears a convenient lack of conscience or “rising complacency” (Lewis 2015) regarding climate change within these TV bulletins, while wealth and consumption are championed. Climate change, therefore, might be considered a “potential catastrophe” that consumerism created, but was “incapable of addressing” (Lewis 2010, p.162).

Commercial channels such as ITV1 rely on advertising, promoting major purchases such as cars, homes, consumer durables and items far beyond what is needed for basic survival. There is no evidence on either channel, however, of discourses suggesting that consumer desire should be reduced for the greater good. Evidence here therefore, shows that BBC1 and ITV1 will not broaden the debates and take a more probing approach to the relationship between consumption and environmental damage.

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<sup>2</sup> Monbiot (2015a) and Lewis (2015) both quote the data from this empirical research.

## **9.6 The championing of economic growth and the absence of redistribution.**

The plight of the squeezed middle - the PIE category generating most coverage - appears inextricably linked with economic growth. Capitalism's fundamental premise is that companies must grow (Butterick 2015); it is also the primary measure of economic performance (Picard 2015). Increases in GDP - growth - are driven by demand fuelled by advertisements punctuating commercial broadcasting schedules. That growth is good is the "perceived wisdom" (Lewis and Thomas 2015) and the clear discourse, despite its sustainability being long challenged (see Meadows et al. 1972). Within small businesses for example, continual growth is risky (Hess 2010), the operational emphasis often instead focusing on improvement and efficiency. Aside from environmental arguments, other charges against growth include unsatisfied desire (Lewis 2013a), and that beyond certain thresholds, there is a non-linear relationship between wealth and happiness (Layard 2005; Bok 2010). Finally, political reliance on growth as a cure-all for recessionary problems is also considered the "main barrier" to addressing poverty and inequality (Knight 2011, p.122).

There are considerable arguments questioning the value of relentless growth. However, qualitative findings here support theories that growth has become an essential objective and a political panacea (see also Heinberg 2011). This evidence includes the strong, dynamic metaphors used in reports highlighting growth (Figure 6.2), exemplar of the taken-for-granted assumptions that it is always and wholly positive.

The relationship between growth and inequality is uncertain (Gallo 2002; Hoeller et al. 2012; Ostry et al. 2014; Harrington 2016). Most pertinently, Dobson and Read (2015) describe "a macabre dance of reciprocal legitimization" where inequality is regarded as necessary for growth in order to provide incentives for social mobility, with growth existing "to quieten the voices of those asking for more equality by holding out the promise of an ever bigger cake, from which some crumbs will surely find their way into the mouths of the less fortunate".

Accordingly, the significance of growth, and explaining its prominence within EBF and PIE reporting, is the implied notion that it will "trickle down". The "trickle-down" thesis asserts that all citizens "benefit from a dynamic, growing economy", or, to use



another common metaphor, “a rising tide lifts all boats” (Wisman 2014, p. 11). From squeezed middle stories on BBC1 and ITV1, there seems considerable doubt as to whether wealth really does cascade to the bottom of society, and “scant evidence that recovery alone will address a long term squeeze in living standards both sides of the Atlantic” (Draut 2012, p.131). “Trickle down” economics has therefore failed (Dorling 2014; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014; Dabla-Norris et al. 2015). Indeed, Figure 7.22 indicates that in 2014, the discussion as to whether there was a recovery or not for ordinary people was the most dominant “other discourse” within squeezed middle stories, despite official metrics determining the economy to be in “recovery”.

Oxfam (2016) note that the world’s “richest 62 individuals” hold as much wealth as “the poorest half of the world’s population” and that in 2010, this wealth was held by the 388 richest citizens. In addition, since 2000, “the poorest half of the world’s population has received just 1% of the total increase in global wealth, while 50% of that has gone to the 1% of people on the top of the pile” (Childs 2015). Both statistics suggest that “trickle down” might be better described as an “upward flow”. According to Galbraith’s older, more visceral metaphor, in the “horse and sparrow” model, if the horse is fed enough oats “some will pass through onto the road to feed the sparrow” (Palley 2012, p.138). From the point of view of the people featured in these reports, the mythical horse it seems, is constipated. There appears to be no apparent choice for policymakers other than the pursuit of growth (Lugo-Ocando 2014), but Dobson and Read (2015) provide the most compelling advocacy when they insist that “we must let go of this ‘trickle-down’ nonsense once and for all”.

The failure of “trickle-down” economics has contributed to the increase in inequality. Since liberal economies function on fear and greed (Turnbull and Wass 2010), there are claims that inequality offers incentives and rewards (see, inter alia, Rycroft 2009; The International Labour Organization 2009; Dabla-Norris et al. 2015). Overall, however, the more forcible argument is that there is “remarkably little evidence” supporting the notion that income inequality is positive (Rowlingson 2011, p.36). This idea is reflected in populist terms by late oil baron and politician Clint Murchison. He used another manure-based metaphor, and concluded that “if you spread it [money] around, it does a lot of good. But if you pile it up in one place, it stinks like hell” (Choron and Choron 2011, p.248).

If growth, by itself, is not guaranteed to reach society's lower reaches, then some mechanism of redistribution, either by benefits or taxation, is needed to ensure that first, its benefits reach more of the population, and secondly, that it eases income inequality (see, inter alia, Hoeller et al. 2014; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014; Dabla-Norris et al. 2015). However, of the few income inequality stories identified by this analysis, only one demonstrates such a link to income redistribution. This was BBC1's report featuring an interview with Christine Lagarde from the IMF, where she proposed a programme of "tax on real estate, appropriate but not excessive tax on inheritance, appropriate and properly redistributive tax on income - not excessive - but appropriately progressive" (see Figure 8.24).

Notwithstanding Lagarde stressing that policies should not be "excessive", this single example of inequality being linked to redistribution was eventually overwhelmed by the preoccupation with growth. While many economists and policy makers subscribe to the "trickle down" thesis (Wisman 2014, p.16-17), the same can also be said about the ways that BBC1 and ITV1 report such issues, since they do not obviously challenge the way wealth is dispersed (Lugo-Ocando 2014). While individuals and corporations may be singled out for their misdemeanours, traditional models of consumerism and growth (without reference to distribution) persist.

### **9.7 Defending the indefensible, absent trade unions and a lack of alternatives.**

This research reveals ideological loadings within language and imagery, the major ideological thrust within news reports being the underpinning of the neoliberal economic system. Neoliberalism is often associated with political Conservatism, but its dominion transcends traditional political divides. The Labour Party for example, is considered to have moved towards neoliberalism under Tony Blair (Schifferes and Knowles 2015, p.42). Accordingly, "New Labour" adopted many Thatcherite traits, deeming them compatible with socialism (see Hay and Smith 2000; Hay and Rosamond 2002; Schmidt and Woll 2013). Indeed, Walsh (2015) contends that irrespective of political affiliation, a series of Chancellors have protected and promoted dominant market philosophy. It is claimed therefore, that in contemporary neoliberal systems, agency and blame has shifted from the markets to the state (Hay and Smith 2000; De Ville and Orbie 2014). Indeed, Tables 7.19 and 7.20 for example,

show that corrective action is generally expressed as the state's responsibility, and that the private sector avoids any such agency.

This analysis demonstrates that neoliberalism appears naturalised as a simple fact beyond question (Fairclough 2001). In practice, support for such free market ideology can be evidenced for example, by the lack of any mention of any Western corporate complicity in Robert Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe, the lack of private sector causality regarding new forms of U.K poverty, and the general failure to connect corporate behaviour to the wider system enabling greed and excess.

The key indicators demonstrating the pre-eminence of neoliberal economics are that groups of social actors such as trade unionists are marginalised, that liberal markets are taken for granted, and that coverage often points out the problems with restricting the financial sector. Moreover, few alternatives are offered to the basic system of market growth and soft touch regulation (see, inter alia Davis 2015; Shaw 2015; Murdock 2015). These are now addressed in turn.

The idea that elite discourses are more influential in defining news narratives than those offered by ordinary citizens is further supported by the absence of trade union actors within this research. This is consistent with findings that trade union voices have all but disappeared from news generally (Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2013). As the "largest mass democratic organisations in civil society" (Berry 2013b), trade unions are noted for their ability to negotiate pay, and for their impact on reducing income inequality (see, inter alia, Kaufman 2002; Turnbull 2003). Where unions are absent, pay is depressed, but where unions are stronger, the lower paid are protected and inequality does not increase (Lemieux 2008). Trade unions therefore, are an important potential check to the runaway dominance of free markets.

On one occasion, ITV1 notably mention that trade union influence was key in ensuring that equity bosses were questioned in parliament (Figure 8.18). However, this cannot mask the channel's marginalisation of trade union discourses. As shown in Table 9.1, starting from no appearances at all in 2007, trade union figures represented only 1.5% of social actors contributing to PIE reports on ITV1 in the 2014 sample. On BBC1, the figure increased only marginally, from 1.1%, to 3%. In all, of the 426 non-journalist social actors contributing to PIE news reports across channels and

years, only 8 (1.9%) represented trade unions. Although unions are not actively “demonised” (Schmidt and Woll 2013, p.120), they are all but absent from EBF and PIE coverage.

As has been detailed throughout this analysis, EBF and PIE reporting is characterised by episodes of bad behaviour, criminality, and what might be popularly considered as greed and immorality<sup>3</sup>. However, there is evidence that such behaviour is defended and mitigated, and that the system allowing such behaviour is defended within EBF and PIE reporting. For example, on BBC1, a report about earnings and taxation within the private equity sector (which many might feel includes the injustice of an apparent tax loophole) featured the strongly delivered defence that the sector may move overseas if it was regulated further (Figure 8.19). The disadvantage of additional regulation and/or more stringent taxation is summarised by Robert Peston’s coda that “there would be a cost to Britain” if private equity activity moved overseas. Moreover, there is an emphasis on banks self-relegating (Figures 6.22 and 6.27), or the need to increase competition (Figure 6.26) rather than the advocating of any official intervention. Furthermore, the focus is on the decrease in tax revenues if banks relocated (Figure 6.27 and 8.11), a focus on “breaking the rules” rather than “breaking the law” (Figures 8.8 and 8.9), and the “benefits” of the PPI scandal (Figure 6.29).

In interim conclusion, the reporting of issues such as poverty “seldom challenges prevalent worldviews and ideologies” (Lugo-Ocando 2014, p.5). More specifically, since finance has replaced industry, and is now the primary creator of growth (Walsh 2015), the spirit of neoliberalism predominates. Adair Turner, Chairman of the Financial Services Authority in 2009 (in Schifferes 2011) called for recognition that the crisis was not the fault “of specific institutions and a failure of specific regulations” but was “a crisis for the entire intellectual theory of efficient, rational and self-equilibrating markets”. The inevitable conclusion is that news media generally promotes the idea that issues such as poverty can be reduced and solved by the markets, and that Keynesian solutions are obsolete (Lugo-Ocando 2014).

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<sup>3</sup> This theme has continued into 2016, exemplified by the controversy surrounding former owner of British Homes Stores, Sir Philip Green. One newspaper headline - in the Mail Online - captured all the themes of greed, injustice and immorality: “Whale ahoy! Shirtless Sir Shifty soaks up the sun on his £100m superyacht - as staff and pensioners face uncertain future” (Finan et al. 2016).

While EBF issues have become humanised, and the operational practices of some financial actors confronted, the system, and the institutions and structures allowing such behaviours is not (see, inter alia, Murdock 2015; Schifferes and Knowles 2015; Thompson 2015; Kelsey et al. 2016). The data and analysis presented in Chapters 5-8 supports the conclusion that the market is “sacred” (Appadurai 2016, p.55), and that if news coverage is a shaping influencer of public opinion, neither audiences nor policymakers are being encouraged to think any differently.

One way that free market economics could be challenged is by the presentation of some valid alternatives. Critical discourse analysis considers the significance of silences and absences, and this research finds that any discussion, or even any explicit mentions of alternatives to neoliberalism are notably absent. This is consistent with conclusions that there is little challenge to the basic system of market growth and soft touch regulation (Davis 2015; Murdock 2015; Shaw 2015).

Given the economic, social and environmental nadir accentuated by the global financial crisis, “a world in which things simply go on as usual is already inconceivable” (Jackson 2009, p.6). Consequently, ideas regarding new economic systems incorporating egalitarianism and a lesser reliance on growth are emerging (see, inter alia, Center for The Advancement of the Steady State Economy 2015; Post Growth 2015; Economy for the Common Good 2016; New Economics Foundation 2016). These alternative systems embrace and promote elements including investing in infrastructure, fiscal prudence, addressing inequality and work/life balance, changing the consumer culture, operating within pre-set environmental limits (Jackson 2009), the regulation of incomes (Daly 2008), and corporate “decapitation” where the CEO-led systems become more egalitarian (Lloyd 2010). There are also calls for a return to a culture of repair rather than replace (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Lewis 2013a), for moneyless trade/bartering, and the further regulation of advertising (Layard 2005; Alexander 2014).

In this sample, no such alternatives are discussed or acknowledged by either BBC1 or ITV1. Indeed, one solitary point of potential difference - the alternative model of corporate governance favoured by the Co-operative Bank - is described as “unreformed and cumbersome” (Figure 6.13). These findings are consistent with such alternative regimes and systems remaining on the peripheral of mainstream

debate because they are often ostracised or ignored (Davis 2015), or marked as “extremist” or “hardline” (Kay and Salter 2014, p.764). Without the oxygen provided by TV news coverage, such alternatives will find credibility elusive.

The intransigence shown by BBC1 and ITV1 in not exploring alternatives to traditional capitalism is incongruous. Many ordinary people - including the squeezed middle who dominate PIE news coverage - do not appear to have tangibly benefited under the prevailing free market system. Indeed, society has “come to the end of what higher material living standards can offer us” (Turnbull and Wass 2010, p.273). Indeed, most recently, economic neoliberalism can be considered to have been seriously called into question. The extreme financial situation and near total economic collapse in Greece for example, represents a notable event “in the long tradition of subordinating human welfare to financial power” (Monbiot 2015b). In the U.K, the neoliberal model pursued by a succession of governments between 2007 and 2014 can be therefore characterised thus:

*...the slow jobs recovery, difficult income conditions of the long-term unemployed, questions over how households manage their reduced welfare entitlements and evident problems experienced by young people all point to an urgent need for a radically different programme of policy actions... (Grimshaw and Rubery 2012, p.55)*

Even at the previously discussed WEF summits, agendas are often “far removed from the concerns of ordinary people”, as “grand narratives” determine that “we must not do anything to upset the rich”, and that “despite the biggest banking crash, there has been little effective reform of the financial system as governments seem unwilling to upset the financial wheeler and dealers” (Sikka 2015). Consequently, neoliberal policies are “inherently incompatible with democracy, as people will always rebel against the austerity and fiscal tyranny it prescribes” (Monbiot 2015c). Even when neoliberalism fails, it seems that there is no sense of self-reflection (Davis 2015; Murdock 2015; Kelsey et al. 2016), and the continued defence of banking and capitalism more generally revealed by this analysis confirms as much.

In sum, this analysis reveals that despite neoliberalism being “holed below the waterline” (Schifferes 2011), it remains largely unchallenged as media shy away from blaming markets. The financial sector’s defence against regulation is simply and explicitly refined into a threat to move overseas without an apparent backward

glance. In these cases, no-one points out that this invariably results in personal gain for just a few senior executives. If, with their obligations to serve everyone, journalists on BBC1 and ITV1 do not offer “credible alternatives” to “casino capitalism” (Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2013, p.287), then others seem unlikely to do so.

As Kelsey et al. (2016, p.12) summarise: “despite the failings of free market capitalism... familiar economic structures and practices of past and current governments across periods of boom and bust have remained securely engrained in the discursive practices of political and financial institutions”. Put more succinctly, and supporting conclusions offered by Kay and Salter (2014), this analysis culminates in the final summary that at a point when free market economics can be justifiably held to account by public service media, they fail to do so, and instead, they continue to promote what appears to be a flawed model serving the few, and not the many.

#### **9.8 Why is coverage so unsatisfactory? The thesis of unsuitability.**

As has been shown, income inequality coverage fell away between 2007 and 2014. At first glance, this seems incomprehensible given that the issue was identified as the “greatest global risk in terms of likelihood” by the World Economic Forum in 2012, 2013 and 2014, and that around a third of “other” discourses within income inequality stories in 2014 mention that inequality is increasing (see Table 7.25).

The paucity of income inequality coverage within this research sample might be explained by the concept being absent from political debate until relatively recently. Broadcasters therefore, might simply be said to have been following mainstream political agendas. Then, when income inequality’s public profile became elevated, the lack of coverage can be explained by news value theory, as the issue may have lacked some key characteristics and may be too complex to understand (McCall 2013). Some mechanism therefore, may be required to propel it onto news agendas. Kitzinger (2009) proposes that media often portray “risk” irresponsibly, preferring sensational impacts over cumulative outcomes, events before backgrounds, and stories involving a focus of blame. Indeed, the complex, gradual nature of income inequality may be less newsworthy than other stories because it is a “slow burn” issue, and also because differences/gaps/comparison are more abstract. According to the “burglar alarm” model (Zaller 2003), it is extraordinary events such as catastrophes, trials and misdemeanours that promote stories onto news agendas. Michael Jermy notes

pressure from competing news stories, but claims that “when income inequality reports have come out they’ve hit our agenda”. The data presented in this study does not support such an assertion, at least in terms of the 10pm weeknight news bulletins. However, if income inequality had contained more “burglar alarm” characteristics, then the issue might have appeared more often.

Notwithstanding these other reasons, the most compelling explanation as to why BBC1 and ITV1 do not deeply interrogate this issue is that there is a “cognitive bias” towards free market economics, shared by “policy-makers, economists and financial journalists alike” (Schifferes 2011). The thesis of unsuitability proposes that BBC and ITV news platforms are fundamentally ill-suited to provide a fully probing critique of EBF news, and the progressive coverage of income inequality and other PIE issues.

Epistemologically, critical realism advocates the investigation and discussion of “generative mechanisms” (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014, p.39). Accordingly, the unsuitability of BBC1 and ITV1 can be explained by mechanisms embracing themes of power, politics, governance, public service, funding and tradition. In the case of ITV1, their provision of news is unusually combative when set against traditional understandings of the critical political economy of a commercially driven news provider. As has been shown by some direct comparisons, on occasions, ITV1 often probe and contest, when BBC1 often accept and acquiesce. ITV1’s assertiveness remains confined to individual and corporate levels, but does not extend as far as the systemic level concerning the prevailing environment of encouraging growth without balance, and consumerism without regress to environmental consequence.

Consistent with the “immanent critique” highlighting dissonance and divergence which then generates theories to explain empirical findings (O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014), ITV1’s incisive line towards corporate figures (including a major advertiser) might be part of a concerted effort to increase its credibility as it upgrades its 10pm bulletin. Their newest format incorporates Tom Bradby as sole presenter. If Bradby’s brief was indeed to “drive the bulletin upmarket” and to “talk human being to human being” (Foster 2015), then the hardening of the news agenda and the humanisation of EBF news (see Chapter 6) were underway before such changes. This apparent rebranding indeed, is because, as Michael Jerney claims, the channel has recognised that their viewers “want highly credible journalism around foreign and domestic



current affairs”, and are “looking at every turn to invest in high quality journalism” (interview on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015). Finally, the recruiting of Robert Peston and *Newsnight* Political Editor Allegra Stratton are further indicators that ITV is investing heavily in its hard news provision (Martinson and Conlan 2015; Hewlett 2016; Mosey 2016). To some degree, a strategy of harder news and more probing EBF reporting will serve viewers in ways more closely akin to the normative ideals of journalism. Indeed, Peston is quoted as moving to ITV in part because “I admire what Tom (Bradby) and the others are trying to do, making it more upmarket with more space for serious stories” (Martinson 2016).

ITV1’s lack of progression beyond individual and corporate levels of critical reporting might have a straightforward explanation. Neoliberalism - the regime of limited state intervention – actually requires a strong legislature to implement deregulation (Schmidt and Woll 2013). When the state exercises such power to deregulate, commercial broadcasters flourish as they take advantage of “new commercial opportunities” (Street 2011, p.151). It is unsurprising therefore, that ITV1 do not fundamentally disrupt the economic system enabling such opportunities, and the corporations that fund them to thrive<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, Michael Jermy implicitly confirms the lack of challenge. While many of his comments describe a concerted strategy to invest in high quality journalism, even he, as the instigator of this strategy, concedes that “you’re probably right that our criticism will be about behaviour that our audience finds unethical or illegal, rather than our programmes daily challenging the basis of capitalism” (interview on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015).

As demonstrated in Chapters 5-8, while their content is generally harder, and consistent with normative expectations of public service broadcasting, BBC1’s approach appears at odds with such expectations. It may be anticipated that BBC1 might cover PIE issues in cerebral, impartial and informative ways, and also more often than their commercial rivals<sup>5</sup>. However, stories about banks and private equity

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<sup>4</sup> Harrington (2016) finds that while U.S commercial broadcaster Fox News discussed inequality and poverty surprisingly often versus their competitors, they promoted solutions to these problems that “would actually make inequality and poverty worse”.

<sup>5</sup> Harrington (2016) found that PBS – America’s most trusted broadcaster which does not aim to make a profit - “dedicated three times as much coverage” to economic inequality as CNN, its “closest broadcast competitor” in terms of objectives and ethos.

firms are among examples where the channel appears to defend free market activities. Such findings are consistent with other empirical work finding that the corporation adopts a generally narrow neoliberal focus (see, inter alia, Berry 2013a; Lewis 2013a). Despite its role as a public service broadcaster, the BBC might be considered to be in breach of its noble objectives, especially in face of “the incessant prodding of commercial interests, combined with the Thatcherite love of the market” (McChesney 2000, p.249). In the past too, BBC business reporting was found to avoid the questioning of fundamental ideology and the financial status quo in favour of a more superficial focus (see, inter alia, Svennevig 2007, Lewis 2013a; Jones 2014; Higgins 2015).

On a broader level, BBC1’s pro-business coverage develops into perpetuating hegemonic neoliberalism (Kay and Salter 2014), and an unwillingness to compromise its principles or to validate more Keynesian approaches (Kelsey et al. 2016). As part of this process, the data presented here can be interpreted as pro-establishment, pro-governing elite, and more specifically, pro-Conservative. It seems clear from such master narratives that EBF journalists might be beset with bias and vested interests (Shaw 2015). These inhibit the offering of alternative views and the forcible conclusion is that “the BBC tends to reproduce a Conservative, Eurosceptic, pro-business version of the world, not a left-wing, anti-business agenda” (Berry 2013a). As a further example, the BBC gives “unchallenged air time” to “climate change sceptics” (Painter 2015) who, presumably, are unlikely to support the urgent slowing of consumption and growth so prominent within the post-crisis research data in 2014. Moreover, the dominance of the Conservative party’s preferred economic policies aligned with neoliberalism in General Election coverage on TV news in 2015 (see Cushion and Sambrook 2015; Deacon et al. 2015) further support notions that the BBC is underpinned by pro-Conservative tendencies.

What makes BBC1’s coverage more disappointing is that U.K broadcasters are obliged to be impartial. In practice, and on a superficial basis, BBC1 stories *do* actually contain different viewpoints. However, the structuring of reports ensures that pro-market discourses are privileged and are usually given the “last word”. For example, in Figure 8.15, economic growth might not be immediately benefitting everyone, but the report concludes with Chancellor George Osborne’s promise that his economic plan is working. In Figure 8.17, Labour’s plans to cap rents might be

designed to assist “generation rent”, but the report’s coda frames the plan as a strategy simply to win an election. In Figure 8.19, there is evidence of protest against equity firm operations, but the final conclusion is that if these organisations relocated, the U.K would suffer. Finally, in Figure 8.22, while the rich and powerful are concerned about income inequality, the report begins and concludes with implicit suggestions that growth is more important. In each case, the underlying “takeaway” message is clear.

Kay and Slater (2014, p.768) propose that the BBC’s support for free market logics is explained by a threefold process. These are the “the broader mainstream media and political context in which neoliberalism is conflated with economic ‘common sense’”, “specific instances of government pressure”, and the “ongoing vulnerability of the BBC in respect of the state”.

To take these in turn, Robert Peston - a key onscreen figure in both 2007 and 2014 research samples - describes the BBC as preoccupied about not breaking accepted rules and conventions when training its journalists (Higgins 2014). This institutional and individual rooting is underpinned by general concerns that editorially, despite any claims that the BBC is traditionally left leaning (see Chapter 2), it is increasingly moving to the right of the political continuum. Indeed, even former BBC Chairman Christopher Bland claims that because of proposals by then Chancellor George Osborne to force the BBC to provide licence subsidies to pensioners and so on, the BBC is fast becoming an “arm of government” (Stone 2015). Empirically, the BBC’s pro-establishment positioning is academically supported by research conducted by Wahl-Jorgensen et al. (2013), summarised by Justin Lewis as showing that “under pressure”, the BBC “has been pushed to the right” (Burrell 2014). The previously mentioned analysis of election coverage further supports this conclusion. Furthermore, from the research data presented here, the traditionally socialist values of trade unions are overwhelmed by implicit and explicit pro-business discourses. The shift to the political right therefore, is difficult to contest.

Moving away from the institutional to a more personal level, and fuelled by a system incorporating costly levels of education followed by unpaid internships, evidence shows that journalists are increasingly drawn from privileged backgrounds. Jones (2014) indeed, provides a detailed and compelling examination of BBC hierarchy from

Chairmen to editors, producers and senior journalists, and reveals their indisputable support for conservative ideology and free market ideals.

As one journalist suggested, “when push comes to shove, senior people at the BBC consider themselves part of the establishment” (Higgins 2014). Indeed, it is difficult to contest that the BBC is an innately conservative organisation whose key journalistic staff are ideologically allied to the political right. For example, Robert Peston spent long periods of employment with the *Financial Times* and *Telegraph*, both considered as politically right of centre (Leveson Inquiry 2012). Andrew Neil, another prominent BBC political commentator (see Figure 8.9), is quoted by Hasan (2009) as calling for a “liberalisation” of the economy, radical tax reduction and private sector competition on a scale “not yet contemplated”. Furthermore, former BBC Political Editor Nick Robinson is a former chair of the Young Conservatives “at the height of Thatcherism”, and Robbie Gibb (currently Editor of BBC Live Political Programmes) is a former deputy chair of the Federation of Conservative Students, eventually shut down by Norman Tebbit for being “too right wing” (Hasan 2009).

Further, posit (Kay and Salter 2014, p.763), “the BBC is ingrained into the cultural fabric of the British state and is structured through the constitutional framework of liberal capitalism, and a class-based liberal nationalism upon which the former rests”. While still employed by the BBC, Peston conceded that “the broadcaster actually veers towards a right-wing, pro-establishment view for fear of criticism” (Sommers 2015). In sum, the reason that the BBC, in its role as primary public service broadcaster does not provide incisive and probing reporting of EBF and PIE issues is that on institutional and personal levels, it is too closely aligned to the neoliberal model that enables poverty, the squeezed middle and income inequality to thrive.

Moving to the second and third parts of Kay and Slater’s (2014) three-part explanation, the pressure to adhere to right wing political and economic agendas might be interpreted as being the direct result of the imminent renewal of its Royal Charter in 2016. Indeed, Justin Lewis reflects that “it is the BBC’s cyclical dependence upon whoever happens to be in government during the licence renewal period that is the greatest threat to its impartiality” (cited in Burrell 2014). In addition to the institutional and personal leanings within the corporation, in the current pre-charter period, there might also be a tendency for even more caution as the corporation

strives to retain its current form and funding. For example, ahead of its Royal Charter Review in 2016, the Government published a green paper making numerous statements indicating the increased degree to which the BBC and its operations would be scrutinised. Such statements include:

*We also need to ask some hard questions in Charter Review if we are to ensure the future success of the BBC...*

*The BBC has fallen short of the high standards we should expect... there have been editorial failings related to these revelations [the Jimmy Savile case] and in other areas...*

*Pay-offs for senior executives and the growth in the number of senior managers and size of their salaries have drawn criticism that the BBC has only recently begun to address...*

*Governance systems have proved opaque and cumbersome. Lessons must be learned in all of these areas if the BBC is to address the challenges of the future... (Department for Culture Media and Sport. 2015, p.2).*

Such statements are in addition to more anecdotal evidence, such as then Prime Minister David Cameron's suggestion that he was going to "close down" the corporation, which Nick Robinson claims, "joke or threat", is "too close to what many in his party want to be laughed off" (Toynbee 2015). In conclusion, the BBC's critical political economy - a public service broadcaster funded by a licence fee with indirect influence from the government of the day - actually impinges on its ability to be objective, independent and sufficiently probing on behalf of an audience that traditionally trusts it to act in its best interests. Such caution is unlikely to foster any critique of neoliberal economics, and the proposal of any radical alternatives.

### **9.9 Defining unsuitability in terms of absence.**

The way that BBC1 reports EBF and PIE issues has a wider impact on public perceptions, but these research findings also have implications for the corporation's obligations to provide "due impartiality" (see also Berry 2013a; Thomas 2016).

The BBC's required impartiality was formerly conceptualised as a "seesaw" model, where the left/right political binary received equitable coverage and opportunity. More recently, this model has been redefined as a "wagon wheel", incorporating a wider spectrum of opinion (Bridcut 2007, p.7). Mindful that neoliberal economics is

not the exclusive domain of the political right and also finds favour within for example, the Labour Party (see, inter alia, Hay and Rosamond 2002; Schmidt and Woll 2013; Walsh 2015), the range of politicians featured within PIE coverage rarely moves outside of mainstream politics and does not for example, consider the Green Party who might offer alternative thinking (see Table 7.26). Theories about a narrow range of permitted ideologies are supported by the BBC's decision not to allow the Green Party any party political broadcasts outside election campaigns (Perraudin 2016).

Elsewhere, the move from "seesaw" to wagon wheel has been empirically challenged (Wahl Jorgensen et al. 2013). Kay and Salter (2014, p.765) express concern that the BBC do not "fulfil its duty to act impartially between competing policy options, and to furnish citizens with a range of views, ideas, facts and policies that could form the basis of democratic will-formation in a public sphere". The lack of a range of opinions across party politics, academia, trade unionism and the third sector in his research (see Chapter 7) means that such a conclusion can be fully supported.

Even if the BBC is undeniably allied to an establishment underwriting right of centre philosophies and neoliberal economics, by simply adhering to its obligations to provide wagon wheel impartiality, it would at least be providing a wider debate, including some of the social actors, political organisations and alternative economic systems that would undeniably drive deeper discussion about income inequality. ITV1 however, does not provide *fully* balanced economic coverage either. Michael Jerney notes that ITV programming is monitored by panels considering diversity (interview on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015), but these do not appear to have corrected for example, the lack of trade union contributions to news reports. Accordingly, there can be legitimate concerns that by converging in terms of format, conventions, and a lack of challenge to the systemic status quo, the U.K's two most watched news bulletins are not offering any real choice. Michael Jerney claims that "there are places where you can see challenges to capitalism" on ITV, but they are not evident anywhere in *this* research sample.

That narrative developed by this research is that news has become harder and more serious on BBC1 and ITV1, as the channels have become increasingly similar in terms of the news they present and the conventions they employ do so. EBF news has been

redefined by the financial crisis, as ITV1 in particular take a more critical approach to reporting corporations and their employees. EBF stories increasingly appeal to editors and audiences because news now concerns people and their flaws rather than statistical data. Income inequality however, may not contain sufficient news values, but more compellingly, beyond the corporate level, neither ITV1 (because of their reliance on advertising) and BBC1 (because of their connections to “the establishment”) provide sufficiently progressive and emancipatory coverage of an issue that scholarly communities have framed as having such contemporary importance.

The increase in attention and significance of income inequality is not reflected in the coverage it receives, and until this happens and the issue is illustrated, debated, tested, and the causes and consequences examined, any legislative action or changes in behaviour, policy and ideology seem unlikely.

## **Chapter 10. Change is unlikely, but still possible.**

Underpinning this research project is a wish to change the state of affairs where “inequality, income concentration, the behaviour and influence of the super-rich tend to be treated as part of the natural order of things, warranting no more than marginal social science attention” (Wade 2014, p.2).

Accordingly, the study began with the objective of establishing if, and how income inequality - “the great debate of our age” - was being discussed on two of the U.K’s most watched news bulletins. TV news is a key carrier of public information, and its coverage of PIE issues is a key site for analysis, since media has “real influence by improving understanding of, and interest in, the situation of poor people... It can stimulate and feed debate and ensure that readers, viewers and listeners are better informed” (Seymour 2009, p.42). Research into TV news is especially important, since unlike print and online journalism, broadcast news must be impartial, and in the case of BBC and ITV, it must also provide varying degrees of public service. Aside from the clear political, cultural and commercial ideologies evident in, and promoted by, print and online news, broadcast news is one place where the public can reasonably expect to find incisive, useful and balanced coverage of matters of socio-economic importance.

The conceptualising of income inequality as a multifaceted phenomenon comprising poverty, wealth and the squeezed middle, and the complexity of identifying the location of these stories necessitated a wide examination of news. Focusing on the BBC1 and ITV1 10pm bulletins in 2007 and 2014, this comprehensive quantitative sweep and the qualitative analysis that followed it enabled some conclusions about news agendas in general, EBF news in particular, and PIE issues most specifically in two discrete years bookending the global financial crisis.

The project findings can, in part, be summarised as “old wine in new bottles”. Although the specific EBF and PIE foci are, as far as can be established, unprecedented in terms of their siting within U.K TV news, the data shows that consistent with the consensus emerging from extant research, coverage of these issues generally falls below what can justifiably be expected from public service broadcasters. Indeed, within a detailed content analysis covering two years and a total of over 9,000 news stories, income inequality is barely touched upon, and indeed, is less evident in 2014 than it was in 2007.



Within the U.K's hybrid model combining public service and commercial objectives, the BBC1, as primary public service broadcaster, could reasonably be expected to provide the "gold standard" in EBF and PIE news coverage. However, given that the public are not being adequately served by our broadcast system, it can be concluded that ITV1 might be the "story", and BBC1 "the problem". Evidence shows that the BBC provide a generally indolent examination of corporations and the financial sector in particular, while ITV1 are notably more gladiatorial, albeit this does not extend beyond a corporate level to any critique of the wider financial system. Accordingly, these research findings can challenge the traditionally established approaches that these channels are considered to take.

Critical realist research and the imperative to move beyond description towards explanation facilitates the thesis of unsuitability, which proposes that both channels, for different reasons, provide coverage of PIE issues that mainly serves the interests of those who are apparently suffering the least. Accordingly, fundamental and ultimately improbable changes are needed before these two channels in particular, and journalism more generally, attend to income inequality and its associated issues with the focus and attention they merit. While journalism has a general lack of bite, pedagogical practices in Business and Management Schools might also be complicit. Tourish et al. (2010, p.545-46) for example, claim that "typically" within teaching programmes, "there is little mention of greed, shame, duplicity, stupidity, hubris, soaring salaries, power, and lack of democracy/employee involvement".

Furthermore, via different relationships with media outlets, NGOs may be more successful in publicising public narratives about PIE focusing on causation and solutions (Hanley 2009). Accordingly, social actions regarding PIE issues would be more strongly promoted (McKendrick et al. 2008; Robinson et al. 2009). In sum, if corporate behaviour was different, and issues like inequality were packaged differently, reporters would have different, and more compelling stories to tell. The BBC1 report outlined in Figure 8.24 shows that this type of reporting is possible, however the combined efforts of businesspeople, economists, politicians, NGOs and and journalists are needed for a sustained improvement.

Overall however, despite some unexpected and hopeful sub-narratives, this research reveals an expectedly bleak outlook. The project began by asking whether Robert Peston's claim that income inequality was "fast becoming one of the great debates of our age" was justified in terms of coverage. The conclusion is that it is not, but this can be most pertinently summarised by the

unlikely figure of Niccolò Machiavelli, whose name is synonymous with the duplicitous and unscrupulous behaviour that has featured as such a strong theme within EBF and PIE coverage. Quoted by La (2015), “the reason there will be no change” claims Machiavelli, “is because the people who stand to lose from change have all the power. And the people who stand to gain from change have none of the power.” While this is the case, even if income inequality *is* actually a great debate, it certainly is not when measured by the volume and type of coverage provided by the U.K’s leading TV news providers.

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## Appendix 1. Bulletins missing from the research sample.

### 2007

(All bank holidays excluded)

BBC1					
29 <sup>th</sup> January 30 <sup>th</sup> January 31 <sup>st</sup> January  1 <sup>st</sup> February 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 5 <sup>th</sup> February 6 <sup>th</sup> February 7 <sup>th</sup> February 8 <sup>th</sup> February 9 <sup>th</sup> February 14 <sup>th</sup> February	30 <sup>th</sup> April	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2 <sup>nd</sup> May 3 <sup>rd</sup> May 4 <sup>th</sup> May 7 <sup>th</sup> May 8 <sup>th</sup> May 9 <sup>th</sup> May 10 <sup>th</sup> May 11 <sup>th</sup> May 14 <sup>th</sup> May 15 <sup>th</sup> May 16 <sup>th</sup> May 17 <sup>th</sup> May 18 <sup>th</sup> May 21 <sup>st</sup> May 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 24 <sup>th</sup> May 25 <sup>th</sup> May 28 <sup>th</sup> May  22 <sup>nd</sup> June 27 <sup>th</sup> June			1 <sup>st</sup> November 14 <sup>th</sup> November 23 <sup>rd</sup> November 27 <sup>th</sup> November  11 <sup>th</sup> December

ITV1					
5 <sup>th</sup> February 6 <sup>th</sup> February 7 <sup>th</sup> February 8 <sup>th</sup> February 9 <sup>th</sup> February	30 <sup>th</sup> April	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2 <sup>nd</sup> May 3 <sup>rd</sup> May 4 <sup>th</sup> May 7 <sup>th</sup> May 8 <sup>th</sup> May 10 <sup>th</sup> May 11 <sup>th</sup> May 14 <sup>th</sup> May 15 <sup>th</sup> May 16 <sup>th</sup> May 17 <sup>th</sup> May 18 <sup>th</sup> May 21 <sup>st</sup> May 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 23 <sup>rd</sup> May	8 <sup>th</sup> July	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2 <sup>nd</sup> October 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 4 <sup>th</sup> October 5 <sup>th</sup> October 8 <sup>th</sup> October 9 <sup>th</sup> October 10 <sup>th</sup> October 11 <sup>th</sup> October 12 <sup>th</sup> October 15 <sup>th</sup> October 16 <sup>th</sup> October 17 <sup>th</sup> October 18 <sup>th</sup> October 19 <sup>th</sup> October 22 <sup>nd</sup> October	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 5 <sup>th</sup> November 6 <sup>th</sup> November 7 <sup>th</sup> November 8 <sup>th</sup> November 9 <sup>th</sup> November 12 <sup>th</sup> November 13 <sup>th</sup> November 14 <sup>th</sup> November 15 <sup>th</sup> November 16 <sup>th</sup> November 19 <sup>th</sup> November 20 <sup>th</sup> November 21 <sup>st</sup> November 22 <sup>nd</sup> November

		24 <sup>th</sup> May 25 <sup>th</sup> May 28 <sup>th</sup> May		23rd October 24th October 25th October 26th October 29th October 30th October 31st October	23 <sup>rd</sup> November 26 <sup>th</sup> November 27 <sup>th</sup> November 28 <sup>th</sup> November 29 <sup>th</sup> November 30 <sup>th</sup> November  3 <sup>rd</sup> December 10 <sup>th</sup> December 11 <sup>th</sup> December 12 <sup>th</sup> December 13 <sup>th</sup> December 14 <sup>th</sup> December
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## 2014

(All bank holidays excluded)

BBC1					
30 <sup>th</sup> January			18th July 21st July 23rd July		
ITV1					
30 <sup>th</sup> January 31 <sup>st</sup> January		6 <sup>th</sup> May	9 <sup>th</sup> July	26 <sup>th</sup> September	

## **Appendix 2. Coding Manual for Levels 1 and 2 Content Analyses.**

The coding frame was designed to introduce as much nuance as possible to the understanding of news agendas, and to capture the information appropriate to the research questions. The coding frame can be understood in terms of specific categories and more generic, default categories which accommodate stories that cannot be reasonably otherwise allocated. It can also be considered in terms of British and international categories, and others which are procedural conventions for the television channels considered in this research.

Variables were developed from extensive trial and error piloting, involving the coding and recoding of a range of examples, and the subsequent refining of the coding frame, especially where variable choices were limited (for example, thematic/episodic framing). Many categories were added inductively, and then reallocated to a narrower range of more general categories constructed from all captured categories. This narrower range was synthesised by grouping together variables that had some obvious synergy.

Each category is marked as either “one chosen” or “can be more than one”. In all cases, for categories where only one choice was required, the most dominant of the possible options was selected.

Whole bulletins were watched and coded. The first news story was deemed to begin following the bulletin idents and headlines. Routine weather updates at the end of the bulletins were not included. Every available weekday bulletin between New Year’s Day and the end of the last complete week before Christmas Day were considered. Weekends and Bank Holiday bulletins were also omitted.

### **Level 1 Content Analysis.**

**Channel (one chosen)** Either BBC1 or ITV1.

**Date (one chosen)** The date was recorded in the format: day/ month/ year.

**Story category (one chosen)** The overriding criterion used within the decision-making process was the thrust of the story. In other words, where more than one category could be selected, only the most dominant was chosen based on time spent, dominance within story framing and so on. Stories were assigned one category from the following:

These categories attended to U.K news only –

**Political Process/policy/obituary** - this category was considered as a political “default”. It was also selected where one particular political personality was central to the report, for example the death or memorial of a political figure.

**Political Scandal/Controversy about politicians themselves** - concerning any controversial behaviour, scandal, crime or criminal activity associated with a British politician or politics more widely. Political scandals involving international politicians were either categorised as “Foreign Affairs” or “Political Personalities” depending on the thrust of the story.

**Education** - concerning issues associated with any level of British education and the social actors participating within it.

**Royal Family** - concerning the British Royal Family, where their involvement within the story is seen as the dominant element.

**Defence** - concerning British Defence/Armed Forces, separate from combat/war situations themselves.

**Transport** - concerning British transport systems, like air, sea, road or rail.

**Economy** - concerning the wider British economic landscape, rather than specific or generic business stories, which are more narrowly focused. These included issues such as the economic recovery, growth, housing market, interest rates, unemployment and so on.

**NHS / Medical** - concerning the National Health Service, or the medical profession in the U.K. Some scientific advances might be more appropriately coded as “scientific”.

**Scottish Independence** - concerning the 2014 issue of Scottish Independence and the associated referendum campaign.

**Home Affairs** - concerning British issues not fitting easily into any other category. For example, prison overcrowding, police procedures or the legal system.

*These categories transcend international boundaries and deal with news in the U.K and beyond:*

**Crime** - concerning any specific criminal activity, case or trial. Where the general issue of crime was concerned (like statistics, trends or crime legislation), “Home Affairs” or “Foreign Affairs” was often considered more appropriate if the story was U.K.-based.

**War/Conflict/Terror** - concerning any terrorist activity or atrocity, or any intra-national or international conflict involving injury and destruction beyond what may be reasonably considered as “civil unrest” or “foreign affairs”. (The commemorations of WWI during 2014 for example, were often coded as “Art / Culture / History”).

**Religious/Religion** - concerning a dominant religious element, but not when sectarianism was overshadowed by war or terrorism.

**Accidents/Tragedies/Disasters** - concerning an unforeseen accident or tragedy involving loss of life or loss of property. Some such stories were coded as “Weather”, depending on the central thrust of the story.

**Science/Technology/Space** - concerning scientific or technological advances, and developments which could not be accommodated elsewhere. Some stories about medical equipment were also considered as “Health/Medical”, depending on the thrust of the story.

**Sport** - concerning any sort of sport. Where the story thrust concerned a single personality rather than any sport they play, then “Celebrity” was sometimes chosen, if more appropriate.

**Celebrity** - concerning any well-known personality or personalities, where their celebrity was a central, rather than an incidental element of the report, and where the story may not have made the news if it was not for the celebrity element.

**Health/Medical/Disease/Research** - concerning health issues, or disease, or the investigations into disease and illness (for example the Ebola crisis). Stories concerning the UK's National Health Service or the actions or activities of medical professionals or practitioners which were coded "NHS/Medical".

**Popular Entertainment** - concerning popular entertainment such as films, pop music and so on. In other words, entertainment and culture commonly considered as "low culture".

**Immigration/Asylum** - concerning the movement (legal or otherwise) of individuals or groups from one country to another.

**Civil Unrest** - concerning peaceful protesting and the general unrest within any country stopping that stops short of war, conflict and loss of life.

**Environment** - concerning environmental affairs and issues, including climate change.

**Human Interest** - concerning a human element (often light-hearted) that cannot be categorised elsewhere.

**Animal related** - concerning animals, whether trivial/light-hearted or more serious issues such as bird flu or foot and mouth.

**Foreign Affairs** - concerning affairs not categorised as "war/conflict/terrorism", and where the focus was not on an individual politician. Also includes foreign economies, but not specific or generic business stories.

**Weather** - concerning the weather and its consequences. Where there was significant loss of life, these were coded as "accidents".

**Media** - concerning the functions and operations of media organisations. The business and commercial elements of media are coded as either "Business Specific" or "Business Generic".

**Art/Culture/History** - concerning more highbrow entertainment, which could be described as "high culture". Also includes references to history often intertwined with cultural icons and artefacts.

**Newspaper headlines/Review** - concerning a review of the next day's newspaper headlines.

**Business Specific** - concerning a specific commercial organisation or personality.

**Generic Business** - concerning a business sector, or group of businesses that were in some way connected, such as the insurance or cosmetic industries for example.

**Market Summary** - concerning stock market or currency news.

**Nuancing of “Business Specific” or “Business Generic” sub stories (one chosen).**

If “Business Specific” or “Business Generic” were chosen, then such items were coded further, to capture the particular sector, and the particular issue being reported on. These categories captured these business sectors:

**Banks/Lenders** - concerning banks, building societies or pay day lenders.

**Insurance** - concerning any form of insurer.

**Motor** - concerning motor manufacturers, rather than the more generic “Transport” sector.

**Technology/Media/Communications** - concerning organisations like computer/tablet/mobile phone manufacturers, media organisations and PR companies.

**Fashion/Cosmetics** - concerning clothing/fashion companies and make-up. Pharmaceuticals (non-cosmetic) were coded accordingly.

**Agriculture** - concerning any story about farming or the products of farming.

**Energy** - concerning gas, electricity, oil and any other sort of energy source.

**Hospitality/Catering/Travel/Leisure** - concerning hotels, theme parks, leisure centres, restaurants, and holidays more widely. Some stories were coded as “Transport” if this was better described the major thrust of the story.

**Home improvement/Building property development** - concerning construction, home improvements and property management / speculation.

**Transport** - concerning roads, rail, airports, buses, planes and so on. Motor car manufacturing was coded as “Motor”.

**Supermarkets** - concerning large or small supermarkets.

**Pharmaceuticals** - concerning the manufacture of drugs and medicines (non-cosmetic).

**Food Production** - concerning any high or low technology food processing (as distinct from “Agriculture”).

**Online retail** - concerning reports where the online element of retail was central.

**Postal** - concerning stories about any postal or delivery services.

**Toys** - concerning toy or fancy goods manufacturing.

**Generic retail** - a default category when the story does not fit other retail categories (such as “supermarket”, “online” and so on).

**Betting** - concerning the broad gambling industry (including online gambling).

**Coffee or wine retail** - concerning the sales of coffee or wine.



**Steel** - concerning the manufacturers of steel.

**Arms** - concerning the manufacturing of munitions and ordnance.

**Public sector** - concerning the civil service, and any nationalised institutions not covered by any of the other categories.

**Engineering** - concerning engineering/industrial manufacturing not adequately described by any other categories.

**Water** - concerning the private/public utility of water supplies.

**Mining** - concerning the mining of materials (which are not otherwise described as “energy”).

**Unspecified** - where the sector is unclear.

**Further nuancing of “Business” sub stories (one chosen).**

Once the sector was selected, “Business Specific” or “Business Generic” reports were nuanced further. These categories captured business issues -

**Pensions** - concerning the provision of pensions by employers, and their payment to employees/retirees.

**Scotland** - concerning the implications to business from any possible future Scottish independence.

**Taxation** - concerning any types of tax including VAT, income, capital gains, corporation and so on.

**Climate Change/environment** - concerning the impact of business on climate change and the environment.

**Working hours** - concerning the length of the working day, or any other issue concerned with the amount of hours that people work, or are required to work.

**Migration/offshoring of jobs/relations with overseas companies** - a wide category concerning how organisations and their jobs moved overseas, and/or the trading relationships between organisations across national borders.

**Workplace issues** - this is a default category about places of work where no other category was appropriate.

**Data protection** - concerning all matters of data storage, accessibility and protection.

**Productivity** – concerning issues regarding levels of output.

**Pay** - concerning all elements of remuneration, ranging from executive salaries, to the minimum wage and all points in between.

**Failing organisations** - concerning companies that are struggling or in decline.

**Product/plant/vessel launch** - concerning the opening of any new building or industrial facility, or the launch of any new product.

**Refurbishment** - concerning reports about the refitting of buildings or ships.

**Strikes** - concerning all types of industrial action.

**Market dominance of geographical area** - concerning reports where industries or sectors dominate a specific geographical area.

**Profitability/prices/sales levels** - concerning reports about the sales performance and pricing strategies.

**Takeover/merger/sales/alliance** - concerning reports about any ways in which organisations join forces, permanently, formally or otherwise. International relationships may be often coded as “Migration/offshoring of jobs/relations with overseas companies” if more appropriate.

**Compensation** - concerning reports about how compensatory payments are made from one party to another.

**Customer/supplier relations** - concerning the interaction between organisations and their suppliers or customers, as opposed to the relationships between companies.

**Unethical/illegal behaviour** - concerning the nefarious activities of either whole organisations, or groups or individuals within them. This includes behaviour that appears or is described as unethical even though it may still be legal.

**Recalls/Faulty products** - concerning products being recalled by their manufacturers.

**Planning issues** - concerning the application for constructing new buildings.

**Home improvement of building** - concerning the construction industry more widely.

**Share value** - concerning the movement/fluctuation of company share values.

**Leadership issues** - concerning organisational leadership, and where no other category is more appropriate.

**Ethical shopping** - concerning the issue of sourcing any materials from organisations who promote and support ethical sourcing of their products, and/or avoid certain types of investment and so on.

**Job losses** - concerning redundancies and job losses that are not involved in companies moving across international borders (see “Migration/ offshoring”).

**Industry showcase** - concerning special events or occasions when industries are showcased (military displays, for example).

**Employee relations** - concerning interaction between companies and their employees (as opposed to the relationships between companies and their customers or suppliers).

**Advertising regulations** - concerning the legislation, rules and the general policing of advertising.

**Union issues** - concerning any reports where trade unions or their members are central.

**General levels of employment and job creation** - concerning employment rates, and creating jobs, rather than job losses or reductions.

**New regulations** - concerning legislation or regulation generally (but not advertising).

**Sustainability** - concerning the long term survival of a particular sector/industry. Sustainable energy for example, was coded as either “environment” or “energy”, depending on the dominant element of the report.

**Product availability** - concerning the availability of products, including shortages, over production, and so on.

**Water supplies and suppliers** - concerning the supply of water and those organisations supplying it.

**Safety issues** - concerning the general issue of safety of employees, customers and suppliers.

**Further nuancing of “Economy” sub stories (one chosen)**

If “Economy” was chosen, then these items were analysed further to capture the particular **issues** being covered. These **issues** were as follows -

**Banking/Lending** - concerning the lending of money.

**Energy** - concerning the provision of energy in the broadest sense. For example, this would include the debate about nuclear power stations and how these may impact the wider economy.

**Transport** - concerning road, sea or air transportation.

**Property development** - concerning the speculation of land and property.

**Inflation** - concerning the rate of inflation.

**Interest rates or mortgages** - concerning reports about interest rates and/or the financial products known as mortgages, rather than about housing prices and the process of buying a house, which are coded accordingly.

**House prices or housing market** - concerning the state of the housing market in terms of prices and fluctuations.

**Budget** - concerning the periodic and formal financial statements by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

**Government borrowing** - concerning the sums involved in government borrowing.

**Cost of living** - concerning more general descriptions of fluctuations in the prices of commonly required items.

**Trade deficit/national debt** - concerning the amount owed by a particular nation, or the gap between exported and imported products.

**Minimum wage** - concerning the legally set minimum rate of pay.

**Pensions** - concerning either private or state pensions.

**Eurozone** - where the entity of the European trading area/union is central to the report.

**Ireland** - specifically concerning the economic landscape of the Republic of Ireland (Northern Ireland issues are coded as per the remainder of the U.K).

**Taxation** - concerning any sort of taxation.

**National Assets** - concerning artefacts, commodities, land or buildings which are owned by the state.

**Currency** - concerning any national or international currency.

**General financial situation** - concerning the general financial landscape, and where no other category is appropriate.

**Growth/GDP** - concerning the rate of increase of a nation's Gross Domestic Product.

**Austerity** - concerning a government's adoption of policies involving cutbacks and spending restraint thought to impact many ordinary people.

**Productivity** - concerning the rate of output, and/or manufacturing efficiency.

**Pay** - concerning rates of pay other than the minimum wage.

**Market/area dominance** - concerning reports of how one geographical area is dominated by a particular sector.

**Employment/job creation** - concerning rates of employment on a general/nationwide basis.

**Investing in business** - concerning the ways in which governments promote and invest in industry.

### **Summary (one chosen).**

This was a short explanation of the whole story capturing its central feature. For example: "Prime Minister announces a new bedroom tax".

### **Story Order (one chosen).**

This notes the order in which the story (usually comprising more than one news items) appeared within the bulletin.

### Story Length (one chosen).

The length of the story (usually comprising of more than one news items) in seconds. This was measured from the start of the anchor or reporter speaking until the end of their speech act, or the end of the videotape.

**There were no more variables involved with Level 1 Content Analysis.**

## **Level 2 Content Analysis.**

For items deemed to contain traces/references of the key PIE issues, then additional variables in addition to those variables attended to by Level 1 analysis:

### Journalistic conventions (one chosen).

There were instances where stories were sub divided into a number of conventions. For example, a general story about foodbanks might begin with a general introduction, followed by another item (by a different reporter) explaining the reasons why foodbanks are increasing, focusing on the lived experiences of those involved. In such a case, this would be coded as two separate items.

The news item itself was categorised as being either of the following:

**Anchor** - where the story was only dealt with by the news anchor on a self-contained basis. If a very short anchor introduction then moved to another convention, the other convention was chosen.

**Live two way** - a live interaction between the news anchor and a reporter.

**Live two way with embedded package** - where the interaction between news anchor and reporter contained an edited package - usually the non-live section was positioned between live elements.

**Edited package** - a non-live intervention narrated by a reporter (not an anchor) which may include interviews, footage, graphics and so on.

### Context (one chosen).

Each PIE item was deemed to be concerned with one of the following:

**Poverty** - a story was deemed to be about poverty when the narrative contained reference to financial hardship on a collective or individual basis exceeding what might be described as discomfort.

**Wealth** - a story was deemed to be about wealth when the narrative contained reference to financial prosperity on a collective or individual basis.

**Income inequality** - a story was deemed to be about income inequality when the narrative contained reference to the comparison between wealth and poverty, high pay and low pay, or financial comfort and discomfort.

**Squeezed middle** - a story was deemed to be about the squeezed middle when the narrative contained reference to financial discomfort rather than anything that might instead be considered as poverty.

### **Prominence within report (one chosen)**

This measured the prominence of the PIE theme within the news items. Items were deemed to be one of the following:

**Passing** - where the PIE theme was present, but was hardly referred to and mentioned only in passing, or where the PIE theme was clearly present and referred to more strongly, but it is still not the central to the report.

**Substantive** - where the PIE theme was central to the report.

### **Area (one chosen)**

The geographical region referred to in the PIE report the poverty were determined to be one of the following:

**Africa** - concerning the whole of the African content.

**U.K** - concerning England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Asia** - concerning all parts of Asia including the Middle East, China and India.

**Rest of Europe** - concerning countries in Europe other than the UK.

**The Americas** - concerning North, South and Central America.

**Rest of the World** - concerning nations not included in the other categories, or where the story was a generic “world” issue.

### **The ways that journalists frame stories (one chosen).**

Each PIE report was categorised as being thematic, episodic, or a mixture of both:

**Wholly or mainly thematic** - where the report was presented mainly or completely in general terms, with little or no specific examples.

**Wholly or mainly episodic** - where the report was presented mainly or completely in specific terms, with little or no wider context.

**Roughly equal** – where there was no clear imbalance one way or the other.

### **Causes of POVERTY expressed by journalists (more than one chosen).**

If a **POVERTY** news item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a mention of description of causality, one or more of the following are selected:

**Low wages/seasonal work/no work/wages below inflation** - concerning work and wages.

**Prices/rents/interest rates/inflation/others going up** - concerning these general item increases and /or the overall level of increase (inflation).

**Overspending/risk taking/borrowing/ addiction** - concerning these elements which can be collectively described as individualistic causes and “living beyond ones means”.

**War/migration/failure of crops/disease/lack of aid** - concerning war and its impact, natural phenomena, poor health and hygiene and a lack of assistance. These might be considered fatalistic causes.

**Actions by commercial organisations** - refers to companies moving abroad, closing factories and any other sort of commercial sector action.

**Government policies including benefit cuts/delays** - where government policies are seen to be the “systemic” causes of poverty.

**Rich exploiting the poor/enforcing slavery/criminality** - these are more fatalistic causes of poverty.

**Causes of WEALTH expressed by journalists (more than one chosen).**

If a **WEALTH** item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a mention of description or causality, one or more of these were selected:

**Economic or political stability/government or EU policies** - refers to the general economic conditions that might be conducive to prosperity.

**Criminality and unethical behaviour** - where the wealthy gained their money from nefarious means.

**High salaries/bonus payments** - where wealth was acquired through high salaries and bonus payments.

**Globalisation/migration** - where wealth was acquired through expansion and offshoring.

**Good fortune** - including windfalls, lottery wins, inheritance and so on.

**Entrepreneurship and endeavour** - a recognition that hard work, innovation, and other (legal) endeavour has been responsible for creating wealth.

**Causes of INCOME INEQUALITY expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If an **INCOME INEQUALITY** item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a mention or description of causality, one or more of these were selected:

**Difference in educational opportunity** - concerning the disparity in the chances to go to various schools, access to higher education and so on.

**Rich exploiting the poor/enforcing slavery/criminality** - these are fatalistic causes, concerning how the poor are being somehow exploited by the poor.

**Government policies including benefit cuts/delays** - where government policies are seen to be the “systemic” causes of poverty.

**Companies offshoring or being dominant in their sector** - where companies moving overseas or dominating their industry sector somehow caused an increase in inequality levels.

**High salaries/bonus payments** - where high end salaries increasing more than average salaries in turn increased the gap between the wealthy and the poor.

**Gender imbalance** - where gender issues increased inequality. For example, this could be where male salaries are more than female salaries, causing localised inequality.

**Benefits with jobs or pensions that increase disposable income** - where accommodation, bonuses and other benefits mean that some workers have even greater salaries than is initially apparent.

**Causes of SQUEEZED MIDDLE expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If a **SQUEEZED MIDDLE** item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a mention or description of causality, one or more of these were selected:

**Prices/rents/interest rates/inflation/others going up** - where general increases have caused poverty.

**Low or frozen wages/seasonal or no work/wages below inflation** - where the lack of work, or lowly paid work, or low wages more generally have caused poverty.

**Market collapse/falling demand** - where a lack of demand has brought poverty to the lives of those within that market or sector.

**Government policies** - where government policies (perhaps including benefit cuts or delays but not including taxation) are seen to be the “systemic” causes of poverty.

**Poor lending practices** - where people have been drawn into poverty by poor/excessive lending practices of the financial sector.

**Pension failures** - where people have experienced poverty because their pensions have failed or have been reduced.

**War/migration/failure of crops/disease** - if poverty has been brought on by war and its impact, natural phenomena and poor health / hygiene.

**Consequences of POVERTY as expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If an item referring to **POVERTY** (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a description of consequences, one or more of these were selected:

**Forced into slavery/bonded labour/prostitution/begging/selling body parts/selling children/forced sterilisation/attempted suicide** - where people are forced to do any of these things because they are poor.

**Disease and ill health** - where bad health outcomes are consequential of poverty.

**Hunger** - where a lack of ability to afford to buy food is seen as a consequence of poverty.

**Poor living conditions/sanitation/squalor/overcrowding** - where people are forced into poor physical living conditions.



**Financial hardship/debt/bankruptcy/must deal with inflated prices** – a general category referring to the more financial consequences of poverty.

**Migration** - where people are so poor they are forced to leave their home countries.

**Other** - consequences that are not addressed by any of the other categories.

**Consequences of WEALTH as expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If an item referring to **WEALTH** (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a description of consequences, one or more of these were selected:

**Glamorous lifestyles/expensive homes and possessions and projects** - where wealth was said to bring obviously glamorous lifestyles.

**Facilitates philanthropy** - where wealth enables financial help for others and good causes.

**Bad/criminal behaviour** - where the consequence of wealth is that the wealthy behave badly and/or abuse the power it brings.

**Anger/protest/instability** - where wealth was reacted to by others in terms of protest.

**Wealth means that divorce is costly/does not bring quality of life** - where divorce settlements are higher, or other instances where wealth has not obviously improved the quality of someone's life.

**Brings security/prosperity/happiness/ influence** - a more general category capturing other ways that wealth has improved someone's life.

**Brings benefits to the markets/economy** - where wealth makes a difference to commerce and the wider economy.

**Consequences of INCOME INEQUALITY as expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If an item referring to **INCOME INEQUALITY** (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a description of consequences, one or more of these were selected:

**Economic hardship/repossessions/dependence on aid/benefits** - where the consequences of income inequality are shown to be more about the lack of money.

**Disease/ill health** - where the consequences of income inequality are poor health outcomes.

**Protest/anger/strike** - where inequality causes expressions of protest and anger.

**Physical discomforts such as hunger, poor housing, squalid conditions** - concentrates on the more physical consequences of inequality (apart from disease and ill health).

**Differentials in opportunity** - where there is a difference in the types of opportunity available to the rich and poor.

**Misdeeds of the rich** - where the consequence of inequality is that the wealthy behave badly and/or abuse the power that it brings.

**Loss of work** - where inequality is shown to directly or indirectly cause job losses.

**Less economic stability/dysfunctional society** - where society more widely is seen to suffer as a result of income inequality.

**Glamorous lifestyles** - where inequality of earnings means that some people benefit in terms of their lifestyles.

**Consequences of SQUEEZED MIDDLE as expressed by journalists (can be more than one)**

If an item referring to the **SQUEEZED MIDDLE** (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a description of consequences, one or more of these were selected:

**Economic hardship/repossessions** - where the consequences are the more financial aspects of discomfort.

**Disease/ill health** - where the consequences are associated with poor health outcomes.

**Protest/anger/strike** - where squeezed middle express protest and/or anger.

**People force to take extra work to enhance pensions/income** - where people are forced to consider and pursue additional sources of income.

**Other** - consequences that are not addressed in any of the other categories.

**Blame for any PIE issue as expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If any PIE story included an ascription of blame, one or more of these were selected:

**Government** - where any government is collectively to blame.

**Particular political actor** - if any politician, or head of state is to blame.

**Organisations** - if any organisation (commercial or otherwise) is said to be complicit.

**Consumers** - if consumers are to blame because of for their excessive behaviour.

**Actions called for by journalists in PIE issue story (can be more than one).**

If any PIE story included any call for action, one or more of these were selected:

**Intervention by UK Government** - calls for the government of the day to step in and take some action, which could be economic, legal military and so on.

**The “west” must help the “east”** - calls for richer nations in the west to give monetary aid, or apply sanctions and/or other help to poorer countries in the east.

**Private sector action** - calls for the commercial sector to take action, perhaps by increasing pay, or by not employing illegal labour for example.

**Unspecified help** - where “help” is referred to generically and is not articulated in specific terms.

**Consumer action** - where action should be taken by ordinary people in terms of their purchasing habits, or using their shareholding to express protest for example.

There are other expressions about PIE issues that are significant, but do not occur in the context as either cause, consequence, blame or action. Attending to these other types of discourses ensured that the key themes associated with PIE stories were captured within the data. They were coded according to the following:

**Other discourses about POVERTY expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If, within poverty items, there were other evident discourses that were not identified either as cause, blame, consequence or action, one or more of these were selected:

**Discourses about the misery and distress of poverty** - describing the way poverty makes people feel.

**Discourse about the increasing poverty** - describing how more people are affected by poverty.

**Discourses about greed or misbehaviour of the wealthy** - describing greed and misbehaviour, usually of the rich.

**Discourse about lack of agency on behalf of governments and agency** - describing how governments are not taking steps to address the issue of poverty.

**Discourses about how poverty is being addressed by governments** - describing how governments are taking steps to address the issue of poverty.

**Discourses about how poverty is not being addressed by the private sector** - describing how the commercial sector is not taking steps to address the issue of poverty.

**Discourses about protest and revolt** - describing revolt and protest.

**More neutral descriptive discourses/commentary describing poverty** - the default category where poverty is being described as neither positive nor negative.

**Other discourses about WEALTH expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If, within wealth items, there were other evident discourses that were not identified either as cause, blame, consequence or action, one or more of these were selected:

**Discourses about greed/misbehaviour/excess** - describing how wealth is associated with bad behaviour, greed, excessive spending and lifestyles and so on.

**Discourses about the prevailing conditions associated with wealth** - describing the wider economic system.

**Discourses about intangible benefits of wealth** - describing less physical and measurable benefits of wealth, including fame, the building of power and so on.

**Discourses about how wealth is good for the economy** - describing how wealth stimulates and generally benefits the wider economic landscape.

**Discourses about negative aspects of wealth** - describing how wealth brings more negative associations, for example, with higher taxation and unwanted fame and scrutiny, for example.

**Discourses about philanthropy** - describing how wealth facilitates assistance for good causes.

**Discourses about how endeavour brings wealth** - describing the association between hard work and financial success.

**Discourses about how wealth/high wages are necessary for staff retention or attraction or to properly reward performance** - describing the necessity of paying high salaries to keep and attract the best staff.

**Other discourses about INCOME INEQUALITY expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If, within income inequality items, there were other evident discourses that were not identified either as cause, blame, consequence or action, one or more of these were selected:

**Discourses about greed, excess and misbehaviour** - describing how wealth is associated with bad behaviour, greed, excessive spending and lifestyles and so on.

**Discourses about how inequality is increasing** - describing the increasing gap between the rich and poor, whether with some form of measurement or not.

**Discourses comparing pay/lifestyles/differences between genders** - describing some sort of explicit comparison.

**Discourses about the misery and distress of poverty** - describing the types of negative feelings associated with poverty makes people feel.

**Discourses about the prevailing conditions** - describing the wider economic system and conditions that allow inequality to exist.

**Discourse that defend the wealthy** - describing how the wealthy are not complicit.

**Discourses about recovery** - describing how the economic is improving.

**Discourses about protest and revolt** - describing how income inequality has generated expressions of revolt and protest.

**Discourses about the different positions between Labour and Conservative** - describing how Labour would tax the wealthy, but the Conservatives would be more sympathetic to them.

**Discourses about how the private sector is complicit** - describing the association between rising inequality and how the commercial sector drives the problem.

**Discourses about how the trade unions are helpful** - describing the positive contribution made by trade unions in easing income inequality.

**Discourses about how governments and central banks are attempting to ease inequality** - describing how these institutions are adopting policies that are at least not make the problem worse, and may even be easing it.

**Other discourses about the SQUEEZED MIDDLE expressed by journalists (more than one can be chosen)**

If, within squeezed middle items, there were other evident discourses that were not identified either as cause, blame, consequence or action, one or more of these were selected:

**Discourses about negativity or distress** - describing the distress associated with financial discomfort.

**Discourses comparing pay/lifestyles/differences between gender or geography** - describing some sort of explicit comparison.

**Discourses about recovery** - describing how the economic is improving.

**Discourses about how governments and central banks are attempting to ease discomfort** - describing how these institutions are adopting policies that are at least not making the problem worse, and/or how austerity is necessary.

**Discourses about the prevailing conditions** - describing the wider economic system and conditions allowing the middle to be squeezed.

**Discourses about how many people not feeling any benefit despite an apparent recovery** - describing the lack of an association between the supposed recovery and people benefiting from it.

**Discourses about governments exacerbating discomfort** - describing how government policies in general are making the discomfort even worse.

**Discourses about the pain of austerity** - describing how the specific policies associated austerity are causing distress.

**Discourses about protest and revolt** - describing how income inequality has generated expressions of revolt and protest.

**Discourses about how wages have caught up with inflation** - describing the parity between pay and inflation, so that its impact is negated.

**Discourses about greed, excess and misbehaviour** - describing how wealth is associated with bad behaviour, greed, excessive spending and lifestyles and so on.

**Other** – other discourses that are not addressed in any of the other categories.

**Images shown during POVERTY reports (can be more than one).**

If there were any identifiable images that are clearly used to index poverty, then one or more of these was selected:

**Slums/overcrowding/poor villages in Africa or Asia/homelessness/overcrowding** - typically familiar images involving poor housing, lack of sanitation and so on.

**People being inactive** - people sitting around and not engaged in any particular activity.

**People queuing for food** - people in queues for food.

**People migrating** - people leaving their homes, with their possessions and relocating.

**Protest and violence** - people in protests, demonstrations or violent confrontations.

**People doing menial jobs** - people engaged in routine, simple manual tasks.

**Houses/ house buying or generic consumer spending** - images associated with spending money, often including supermarket shopping and “house for sale” signs.

**Images shown during WEALTH reports (can be more than one).**

If there were any identifiable images clearly used to index wealth, then one of more of these was chosen:

**The trappings of wealth** - usually houses, cars, jewellery, and other apparently expensive items.

**Overcrowding/slum living** - typically familiar images involving poor housing, lack of sanitation and so on, shown as a contrast to wealth.

**Generic shots of consumerism** - images associated with spending money, often including supermarket shopping and “house for sale” signs.

**People doing menial jobs** - people engaged in routine, simple manual tasks.

**Images of protest and violence** - in response to perceived injustice.

**Images shown during INCOME INEQUALITY reports (can be more than one).**

If there are any identifiable images clearly used to index income inequality, then one of more of these was chosen:

**Images of protest and dissent** - in response to perceived injustice.

**Images of slums/overcrowding/poor villages in Africa or Asia/homelessness/overcrowding** - typically familiar images involving poor housing, lack of sanitation and so on.

**People doing menial jobs** - people engaged in routine, simple manual tasks.

**The trappings of wealth** - usually houses, cars, jewellery, and other apparently expensive items.

**Generic shots of consumerism** - images associated with spending money, often including supermarket shopping and “house for sale” signs.

**People being inactive** - people sitting around and not engaged in any particular activity.

**People queuing for food** - people in queues for food.

**Images shown during SQUEEZED MIDDLE reports (can be more than one).**

If there are any identifiable images clearly used to index the squeezed middle, then one of more of these was chosen:

**Families and homes** - images of “regular” families a home or around their homes.

**Consumer spending** - images associated with spending money, often including supermarket shopping and “house for sale” signs.

**Images of protest, terrorism and violence** - in response to perceived injustice.

**People doing menial tasks** - people engaged in routine, simple manual tasks.

**Overcrowding** - typically familiar images involving poor housing, and people living in cramped conditions.

**Metrics used by journalists to describe PIE issue (can be more than one).**

If PIE issues were quantified or expressed using numeric measures, then one of more of these was chosen:

**Inflation** - expressed in terms of a percentage.

**Levels of pay/personal wealth/personal expenses** - expressed in amounts, or rates of pay.

**Employment rates** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Stats from proprietary report** - any numerical references to official figure.

**Prices of key staple items** - prices of housing, food, other essential bills and so on expressed in terms of cost or percentage increases/decreases.

**Levels of disease and life expectancy** - expressed in various ways.

**Levels of debt** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Levels of aid** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Levels of crime** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Official levels** - expressions of the official definition of poverty (60% of median income), Gini coefficient and so on.

**Comparisons with the wealthiest/other regions** - comparisons in terms of sums or percentages.

**Housing levels** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Levels of benefits** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**“Quality of life”** - this could be expressed in terms of a variety of ways, including survey results etc.

**Growth** - expressed in terms of percentages.

**Cost of borrowing/interest rates/return on savings** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Numbers of repossessions** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Stock markets** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Taxation levels** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Consumer spending** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Public spending** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Educational achievement/social mobility** - expressed in terms of levels of attainment, expressed in figures or percentages.

***This concludes the section of analysis attending to journalistic contributions. From this point onwards, variables concern contributions made by other social actors.***

**Type of social actor contributing to PIE reports (one chosen).**

This concerns social actors other than journalists contributing to PIE news items. Onscreen information (captions, commentary and so on) assisted the categorisation of social actors, otherwise they were researched in further detail and ascribed one of the following:

**Family help group/campaigners** - includes any sort of protest/campaigning/lobbying group.

**Citizen/citizen poll** - includes anyone who in the absence of any verbal or visual label can be assumed to be an ordinary employee, a member of the public, or a poll quoting the public opinion.

**Politician** - anyone labelled as a politician, including former politicians who are not clearly belonging to any other category.

**Business person/financial sector actors** - anyone who is identified as representing a commercial organisation.

**Charity/Citizen Advice Bureau** - anyone who is identified as representing a charity or the CAB.

**Criminal** - anyone who is identified by their criminal activities.

**Religious leader** - or anyone representing any religion group or movement.



**Trade union** - anyone representing any trade union. Unless they are labelled as such, members of the public are coded as “citizens” even if it is suspected that they may be trade union members.

**Celebrity** - anyone who is famous but does not clearly fit into any other category.

**NGO/Head of Sporting Association** - anyone identified as representing organisations who are neither commercial nor government departments, and who do not fit into any other category.

**Academic/legal/economists/think tank** - any of these social actors who are often presented as “experts”.

**Government department/public sector** - including central banks, and medical or military sources.

**Political actors contributing to any PIE report (one chosen).**

If the social actors were coded “politician”, the parties they were identified as representing were coded accordingly.

**Conservative**

**Labour**

**Lib Dems**

**Green**

**UKIP**

**Other/unknown** – if no party was given but it was clear that the contributor was a politician, they were coded as “other/unknown”.

**Causes of POVERTY expressed by other social actors (can be more than one).**

If a poverty item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) includes a mention of description of causality, one or more of these are selected:

**Low wages/seasonal work/no work/wages below inflation** - concerning work and wages.

**Prices/rents/interest rates/inflation/others going up** - concerning these general increases.

**Overspending/risk taking/borrowing/addiction** - concerning these elements which can be collectively described as individualistic causes and “living beyond ones means”.

**War/migration/failure of crops/disease/lack of aid** - concerning war and its impact, natural phenomena, poor health and hygiene and a lack of assistance. Might be considered fatalistic causes.

**Actions by commercial organisations** - refers to be companies moving abroad, closing factories and so on

**Government policies including benefit cuts/delays** - where government policies are seen to be the “systemic” causes of poverty.

**Rich exploiting the poor/enforcing slavery/criminality** - these are also fatalistic causes, but also caused by poverty.

**Causes of WEALTH expressed by other social actors (can be more than one).**

If a wealth item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a mention of description or causality, one or more of these were selected:

**Economic or political stability/government or EU policies** - this refers to the general economic conditions that might be conducive to prosper.

**Criminality and unethical behaviour** - where the wealthy have gained their money from nefarious methods.

**High salaries/bonus payments** - where wealth is attained through high salaries and bonus payments.

**Globalisation/migration** – where wealth has been attained through expansion and offshoring.

**Good fortune** - this might include a windfall, lottery win, inheritance and so on.

**Entrepreneurship and endeavour** - a recognition that hard work, innovation, and other (legal) endeavour has been responsible for creating wealth.

**Causes of INCOME INEQUALITY expressed by other social actors (can be more than one).**

If an income inequality item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a mention or description of causality, one or more of these were selected:

**Difference in educational opportunity** - concerning the disparity in the chances to go to various schools, access to higher education and so on.

**Rich exploiting the poor/enforcing slavery/criminality** - these are also fatalistic causes, but also caused by poverty concerning the poor being somehow exploited by the poor.

**Government policies including benefit cuts/delays** - where government policies are seen to be the “systemic” causes of poverty.

**Companies offshoring or being dominant in their sector** - where companies moving overseas or dominating their industry sector has caused an increase in inequality levels.

**High salaries/bonus payments** - where high end salaries increasing more than average salaries has increased the gap between the wealthy and the poor.

**Gender imbalance** - where the issue of gender has increased inequality. For example, this could be where male salaries are more than female salaries, causing a localised inequality.

**Benefits with jobs or pensions that increase disposable income** - where accommodation, bonuses and other benefits mean that some workers have even greater salaries than they appear to have.

**Causes of the SQUEEZED MIDDLE expressed by social actors other than journalists (can be more than one).**

If a squeezed middle item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a mention or description of causality, one or more of these were selected:

**Prices/rents/interest rates/inflation/others going up** - concerning these general increases.

**Low or frozen wages/seasonal or no work/wages below inflation** - concerning work and wages.

**Market collapse/falling demand** - where a lack of demand has impacted the lives of employees within that market or sector.

**Government policies** - where government policies (not including taxation) are seen to be the “systemic” causes of financial discomfort. Can include benefit cuts / delays.

**Poor lending practices** - where people have been drawn into financial discomfort by poor /excessive lending by the financial sector.

**Pension failures** - where people have experienced discomfort because their pensions have failed or being reduced.

**War/migration/failure of crops/disease** - concerning war and its impact, natural phenomena and poor health and hygiene which might be considered fatalistic causes.

**Consequences of POVERTY expressed by other social actors (can be more than one).**

If a poverty item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a description of consequences, one or more of these are selected:

**Forced into slavery/bonded labour/prostitution/begging/sell body parts/selling children/forced sterilisation/attempted suicide** - where people are forced to do any of these things because they are poor.

**Disease and ill health** - where bad health outcomes are consequential of poverty.

**Hunger** - where a lack of ability to afford to buy food is seen as a consequence of poverty.

**Poor living conditions/sanitation/squalor/overcrowding** - where people are forced into poor physical living conditions.

**Financial hardship/debt/bankruptcy/must deal with inflated prices** - this general category refers to the more financial consequences of poverty.

**Migration** - where people are so poor they are forced to leave their home countries.

**Other** - consequences that are not addressed in any of the other categories.

**Consequences of WEALTH expressed by other social actors (can be more than one).**

If a wealth item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a description of consequences, one or more of these are selected:

**Glamorous lifestyles/expensive homes and possessions and projects** - where wealth is said to bring obviously glamorous lifestyles.

**Facilitates philanthropy** - where wealth enables financial help for others and good causes.

**Bad/criminal behaviour** - where the consequence of wealth is that the wealthy behave badly and/or abuse the power it brings.

**Anger/protest/instability** - where wealth is reacted to by others in terms of protest.

**Wealth means that divorce is costly/does not bring quality of life** - where divorce settlements are higher, or where wealth has not obviously improved the quality of someone's life.

**Brings security/prosperity/happiness/influence** - a more general category capturing other ways that wealth has improved someone's life.

**Brings benefits to the markets/economy** - where wealth makes a difference to commerce and the wider economy.

**Consequences of INCOME INEQUALITY expressed by other social actors (can be more than one).**

If an income inequality item (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a description of consequences, one or more of these are selected:

**Economic hardship/repossessions/dependence on aid/benefits** - where the consequences of income inequality are shown to be more about the lack of money.

**Disease/ill health** - where the consequences of income inequality are poor health outcomes.

**Protest/anger/strike** - where inequality causes expressions of protest and anger.

**Physical discomforts such as hunger, poor housing, squalor** - concentrates on the more physical consequences of inequality (apart from disease and ill health).

**Differentials in opportunity** - where there is a difference in the types of opportunity available to the rich and poor.

**Misdeeds of the rich** - where the consequence of inequality is that the wealthy behave badly and/or abuse the power it brings.

**Loss of work** - where inequality is shown to directly or indirectly cause job losses.

**Less economic stability/dysfunctional society** - where society more widely is seen to suffer as a result of income inequality.

**Glamorous lifestyles** - where inequality of earnings means that some benefit in terms of their lifestyles.

**Consequences of SQUEEZED MIDDLE expressed by other social actors (can be more than one).**

If a squeezed middle story (irrespective of whether implied, passing or substantive) included a description of consequences, one or more of these are selected:

**Economic hardship/reposessions** - where the consequences are the more financial aspects of discomfort.

**Disease/ill health** - where the consequences are poor health outcomes.

**Protest/anger/strike** - where squeezed middle causes expressions of protest and anger.

**People force to take extra work to enhance pensions/income** - where people are forced to consider and pursue additional sources of income.

**Other** - consequences that are not addressed in any of the other categories.

**Blame for PIE issues expressed by other social actors (can be more than one).**

If any PIE item included an ascription of blame, one or more of these were selected:

**Government** - where any government is collectively to blame.

**Particular political actor** - if any politician, or head of state is to blame.

**Organisations** - if any organisation (commercial or otherwise) is said to be complicit.

**Consumers** – for their excessive behaviour.

**Actions called for by journalists in PIE issue story (can be more than one).**

If any PIE item included any call for action, one or more of these were selected:

**Intervention by UK Government** - calls for the government of the day to step in and take some action, which could be economic, legal military and so on.

**The “west” must help the “east”** - calls for richer nations in the west to give monetary aid, apply sanctions and/or other help to poorer countries in the east

**Private sector action** - calls for the commercial sector to take action, by increasing pay, or by not employing illegal labour.

**Unspecified help** - where “help” is referred to generically and is not articulated in specific terms.

**Consumer action** – where action should be taken by ordinary people in terms of their purchasing habits, or using their shareholding to express protest for example.

There are other expressions about PIE issues that are significant, but do not occur in the context as either cause, consequence, blame or action. Attending to these other

types of discourses ensured that the key themes associated with PIE stories were captured within the data. They were coded according to the following:

**Other discourses about POVERTY expressed by other social actors (can be more than one).**

If, within poverty items, there were other evident discourses not qualifying as cause, blame, consequence or action, one or more of these were selected:

**Discourses about the misery and distress of poverty** - describing the way poverty makes people feel.

**Discourse about the increasing poverty** - describing how more people are affected by poverty.

**Discourses about greed or misbehaviour of the wealthy** - describing greed and misbehaviour.

**Discourse about lack of agency on behalf of governments and agency** - describing how governments are not taking steps to address the issue of poverty.

**Discourses about how poverty is being addressed by governments** - describing how governments are taking steps to address the issue of poverty.

**Discourses about how poverty is not being addressed by the private sector** - describing how the commercial sector is not taking steps to address the issue of poverty.

**Discourses about protest and revolt** - describing how poverty has generated expressions of revolt and protest.

**More neutral descriptive discourses/commentary describing poverty** - the default category where poverty is being described as neither positive nor negative.

**Other discourses about WEALTH expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If, within wealth items, there were other evident discourses not qualifying as cause, blame, consequence or action, one or more of these are selected:

**Discourses about greed/misbehaviour/excess** - describing how wealth is associated with bad behaviour, greed, excessive spending and lifestyles and so on.

**Discourses about the prevailing conditions associated with wealth** - describing the wider economic system and conditions that facilitate wealth.

**Discourses about intangible benefits of wealth** - describing the less physical and measurable benefits of wealth, including fame, the building of power and so on.

**Discourses about how wealth is good for the economy** - describing the relationship between wealth and the wider economic landscape.

**Discourses about negative aspects of wealth** - describing the relationship between wealth and its more negative associations.

**Discourses about philanthropy** - describing the relationship between wealth and good causes.

**Discourses about how endeavour brings wealth** - describing the association between hard work and financial success.

**Discourses about how wealth/high wages are necessary for staff retention or attraction or to properly reward performance** - describing the necessity of paying high salaries to keep and attract the best staff.

**Other discourses about INCOME INEQUALITY expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If, within income inequality items, there were other evident discourses not qualifying as cause, blame, consequence or action, one or more of these are selected:

**Discourses about greed, excess and misbehaviour** - describing how wealth is associated with bad behaviour, greed, excessive spending and lifestyles and so on.

**Discourses about how inequality is increasing** – describing the increasing gap between the rich and poor, whether with some form of measurement or not.

**Discourses comparing pay/lifestyles/differences between genders** - describing some sort of explicit comparison.

**Discourses about the misery and distress of poverty** - describing the feelings associated with poverty.

**Discourses about the prevailing conditions** - describing the wider economic system and conditions that allow inequality to exist.

**Discourse that defend the wealthy** - describing how the wealthy are not complicit.

**Discourses about recovery** - describing how the economic is improving.

**Discourses about protest and revolt** - expressions of revolt and protest.

**Discourses about the different positions between Labour and Conservative** - describing how Labour would tax the wealthy, but the Conservatives would be more sympathetic to them.

**Discourses about how the private sector is complicit** - describing the association between rising inequality and how the commercial sector drives the problem.

**Discourses about how the trade unions are helpful** - describing the positive contribution made by trade unions in easing income inequality.

**Discourses about how governments and central banks are attempting to ease inequality** - describing how these institutions are adopting policies that are at least not make the problem worse, and may even be easing it.

**Other discourses about SQUEEZED MIDDLE expressed by journalists (can be more than one).**

If, within squeezed middle stories, there were other evident discourses not qualifying as cause, blame, consequence or action, one or more of these are selected:

**Discourses about negativity or distress** - describing the distress associated with financial discomfort.

**Discourses comparing pay/lifestyles/differences between gender or geography** - describing some sort of explicit comparison.

**Discourses about recovery** - describing how the economic is improving.

**Discourses about how governments and central banks are attempting to ease discomfort** - describing how these institutions are adopting policies that are at least not make the problem worse, and/or how austerity is necessary.

**Discourses about the prevailing conditions** - describing the wider economic system and conditions that allow the middle to be squeezed.

**Discourses about how many people not feeling any benefit despite an apparent recovery** - describing the lack of an association between the supposed recovery and people benefiting from it.

**Discourses about governments exacerbating discomfort** - describing how government policies in general are making the discomfort even worse.

**Discourses about the pain of austerity** - describing how the specific policies associated austerity are causing distress.

**Discourses about protest and revolt** - expressions of revolt and protest.

**Discourses about how wages have caught up with inflation** - describing the parity between pay and inflation, so that its impact is negated.

**Discourses about greed, excess and misbehaviour** - describing how wealth is associated with bad behaviour, greed, excessive spending and lifestyles and so on.

**Other** - discourses that are not addressed in any of the other categories.

**Metrics used by other social actors to describe PIE issue (can be more than one).**

If poverty, income inequality, and so on were quantified or expressed using some numeric measure, then one or more of the following were chosen:

**Inflation** - expressed in terms of a percentage.

**Levels of pay/personal wealth/personal expenses** - expressed in amounts, or rates of pay.

**Employment rates** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Stats from proprietary report** - any numerical references to official figure.



**Prices of key staple items** - expressed in terms of cost or percentage increases/decreases.

**Levels of disease and life expectancy** - expressed in various ways.

**Levels of debt** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Levels of aid** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Levels of crime** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Official levels** - expressions of the official definition of poverty (60% of median income), Gini coefficient and so on.

**Comparisons with the wealthiest/other regions** - comparisons in terms of sums or percentages.

**Housing levels** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Levels of benefits** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**“Quality of life”** - this could be expressed in terms of a variety of ways, including survey results etc.

**Growth** - expressed in terms of percentages.

**Cost of borrowing/interest rates/return on savings** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Numbers of repossessions** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Stock markets** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Taxation levels** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Consumer spending** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Public spending** - expressed in figures or percentages.

**Educational achievement/social mobility** - expressed in terms of levels of attainment, expressed in figures or percentages.

**Notes were made indicating what might be good examples of particular phenomenon, or whether items represented typical or atypical cases.**

**This coding manual was provided to the researcher who carried out the reliability testing. More details of the testing process is outlined in Appendix 3a and 3b.**

### **Appendix 3a. Reliability testing for coding.**

In order to validate the quantitative elements within this study, a researcher within Cardiff University was approached and asked to conduct an intercoder analysis on a sample from those stories appearing within Level 1 and Level 2 Content Analyses. This was to ensure that coding decisions had been consistent and that the analysis was repeatable, and that other researchers using the same methods and sample would generate similar results.

Since the Level 1 Content Analysis sample was over 9,300 new items, a sample of just over 1% (100 items) was selected at random and given to the researcher.

The Level 2 Content Analysis sample was 410 news items, and so the researcher was given a random sample amounting to 10%. Full coding manuals were also provided, and the researcher's report is provided in Appendix 3b. The researcher was paid at the standard research rate from the candidate's ESRC research allowance.

As can be seen in Appendix 3b, of the Krippendorff Alpha scores calculated for this study, four variables are between 0.77 and 0.80, which are described as showing "substantial" agreement (Landis and Koch 1977, p.165). The remaining 12 scores are in excess of 0.81, which are described as showing "almost perfect" agreement (Landis and Koch 1977, p.165).

The intercoder process is outlined in Appendix 3b.

### **Appendix 3b - Intercoder testing**

I was asked to conduct intercoder testing for this study.

I was given a coding manual and a 1% sample to code for Level 1 Content Analysis, comprising of 100 news items. I was then given a coding manual and 10% sample of those items subject to Level 2 Coding Analysis, comprising of 50 news items.

I was given access to the news bulletins involved, and asked to code these items accordingly.

Intercoder scores were calculated using the online software tool developed by Deen Freelon of the American University School of Communication as below:



**SCHOOL of COMMUNICATION**  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC



**Deen Freelon**

Associate Professor  
School of Communication

Deen Freelon is an associate professor in the Communication Studies division. He has two major areas of expertise: 1) political expression through digital media, and 2) the use of code and computational methods to extract, preprocess, and analyze very large digital datasets. Freelon has published in peer-reviewed journals including the *Journal of Communication*, *New Media & Society*, *American Behavioral Scientist*, and *Information, Communication & Society*. He is the creator of ReCal, an online intercoder reliability application that has been used by thousands of researchers around the world; and TSM, a network analysis module for the Python programming language. He formerly served as a technology trainer, web designer, and multimedia consultant at Duke University.

His full profile is here:

<http://www.american.edu/soc/faculty/freelon.cfm>

The online intercoder calculator is here: <http://dfreelon.org/utis/recalfront/recal2/>

The scores were calculated as follows:

	Level of agreement	Krippendorff's alpha
Story categories	82.8%	0.81
Order of stories	87.1%	0.86
Story lengths (tolerance of +/- 3 seconds)	92.2%	0.88
Business sub story	85.3%	0.77
Business sector	89.5%	0.88
Business issue	88.2%	0.86
Convention	94.5%	0.84
Context	84.6%	0.77
Area	90.1%	0.77
Types of social actor	92.3%	0.90
Causes	85.3%	0.81
Consequences	88.0%	0.86
Other discourses	90.0%	0.89
Images	86.4%	0.84
Framing	89.1%	0.80
Metrics	92.5%	0.90

Signed.....

Dr Allaina Kilby – Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies  
Cardiff University.

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/people/view/182945-kilby-allaina>

# Appendix 4a. Level 1 Content Analysis Coding sheet.

BBC / ITV    Date.....    Story order.....

Start time.....    End time.....    Length in secs.....

Summary.....

**Code item  
Number**

**STORY CATEGORY** (one only)

UK ONLY – i.e. for UK politics, UK education, UK economy etc.			
Political Process / policy / obituary	Political Scandal/Controversy	Education	Royal Family
Home Affairs	Defence	Transport	Economy
NHS / Medical	Scottish Independence		
UK AND BEYOND – i.e. crime can be US crime, Environment can concern the Arctic etc.			
Crime	War /Conflict/ Terror	Religious / Religion	Accidents/ Tragedies/ Disasters
Science/ Technology	Sport	Celebrity	Health/Medical/Disease/ Research
Business Specific	Popular Entertainment	Immigration/Asylum	Civil Unrest
Environment	Human Interest	Animal related	Foreign Affairs
Weather	Media	Generic Business	Art/Culture/History
Newspaper headlines / Review	Market Summary		

If **ECONOMY** is selected, chose one of these to describe the **ISSUE** being discussed:

Banking / Lending	Energy	Home improvement or building	Transport
Property development	Inflation	Interest rates or mortgages	Budget
House prices or housing market	Government borrowing	Cost of living -	Trade deficit / national debt
Minimum wage	Pensions -	Eurozone	Ireland
Taxation	National Assets	Currency	General financial situation
Growth / GDP	Austerity	Productivity	Pay
Market / area dominance	Employment / job creation	Investing in business	

If BUSINESS SPECIFIC or BUSINESS GENERIC selected, choose one to describe the **SECTOR** being discussed:

Banks/ Lenders	Insurance	Motor	Technology/Media/Communications
Fashion/Cosmetics	Agriculture	Energy	Hospitality/ Catering / Travel / Leisure
Home improvement / property development	Transport	Supermarkets	Pharmaceuticals
Food Production	Online retail	Postal	Toys
Generic retail	Betting	Coffee or wine retail	Steel
Arms	Public sector	Engineering	Water
Mining	Unspecified		

If BUSINESS SPECIFIC or BUSINESS GENERIC selected, choose one to describe the **ISSUE** being discussed:

Pensions	Scottish Independence	Taxation	Climate Change / environment
Working hours	Migration / offshoring / relations with overseas companies	Workplace issues	Data protection
Productivity	Pay	Failing organisations	Product / plant / vessel launch
Refurbishment	Strikes	Market dominance of geographical area	Profitability / prices / sales levels
Takeover/merger /sales / alliance	Compensation	Customer / supplier relations	Unethical / illegal behaviour
Recalls /Faulty products	Planning issues	Share value	Leadership issues
Ethical shopping	Job losses	Industry showcase	Employee relations
Advertising regulations	Union issues	General levels of employment and job creation	New regulations
Sustainability	Product availability	Water supplies and suppliers	Safety issues

# Appendix 4b. Level 2 Content Analysis Coding Sheet.

BBC / ITV    Date.....    Story order.....    News item order.....

Code item  
Number

## JOURNALIST INTERVENTION (one only)

Anchor	Anchor/reporter live two way
Reporter edited package	Anchor/reporter live two way with embedded package

Name reporter ..... Reporter title.....

Which PIE issue?    P / IE / W / SM    (one only)                      Substantive / Central to report?    YES / NO

Geographical location referred to.....

Subthemes within report (one only).....

CAUSES of PIE issues present?    YES/ NO    Which PIE issue? (one only).....

Which causes? (multiple if required) .....

CONSEQUENCES of PIE issues present?    YES/ NO    Which PIE issue? (one only).....

Which causes? (multiple if required) .....

BLAME for PIE issues present?    YES/ NO    Which PIE issue? (one only).....

Who is blamed? (multiple if required) .....

ACTION CALLED FOR present?    YES/ NO    Which PIE issue? (one only).....

Who is blamed? (multiple if required) .....

Any other discourses used (multiple if required) .....

Types of image used (multiple if required) .....

Framing of report

Wholly / mainly thematic

Wholly / mainly episodic

Roughly equal

Metrics used?    YES/ NO    Which ?.....

**NON-JOURNALIST INTERVENTION WITHIN THE REPORT (use multiple sheets if required)**

Name ..... Social actor type (one only) .....

If politician which party? .....

Which PIE issue? P / IE / W / SM (one only) Substantive / Central to report? YES / NO

CAUSES of PIE issues present? YES/ NO Which PIE issue? (one only).....

Which causes? (multiple if required) .....

.....

CONSEQUENCES of PIE issues present? YES/ NO Which PIE issue? (one only).....

Which causes? (multiple if required) .....

.....

BLAME for PIE issues present? YES/ NO Which PIE issue? (one only).....

Who is blamed? (multiple if required) .....

.....

ACTION CALLED FOR present? YES/ NO Which PIE issue? (one only).....

Who is blamed? (multiple if required) .....

.....

Any other discourses used (multiple if required) .....

.....

Metrics used? YES/ NO Which ?.....

**Notes** (Things that are noteworthy that coding frame has not captured)



## **Appendix 5. Glossary of CDA terms.**

These are the CDA analytical “tools” applied to the talk and text within the study, the results of which are described mainly in Chapters 6 and 8. Each is briefly described according to the definitions used by prominent scholars in the field:

<b><u>Tool</u></b>	<b><u>Explanation / definition</u></b>	<b><u>Informing References</u></b>
<b>Presupposition</b>	Statements that might be contentious may go unchallenged in talk or text. For example, “shareholders feel that” assumes a consensus. Presuppositions help to generate wide agreement with what, in the absence of any questioning, appear to be reasonable and logical arguments. Statements are not themselves presumptive, but are given this characteristic by the speaker/writer.	<b>Fairclough (2000), Huckin (2002), Machin and Mayr (2012), Bahaa-eddin (2014)</b>
<b>Lexical choices</b>	Different words generate different reactions from audiences. “Large” and “excessive” for example, might both be used to describe an executive salary. While both are evaluative, one suggests the salary is too high, while the other simply suggests it is considerable. Selecting one word over another can therefore develop a different story frame.	<b>Leitner (1980), Fairclough (2000), Machin and Mayr (2012)</b>
<b>Metaphor</b>	Metaphors are used to explain phenomena, feelings, ideas, events and so on, in terms of something else that is often more familiar to audiences. Metaphors are figures of speech which may be more evocative or impactful. For example, the “financial tsunami” is more dramatic than “the financial crisis”.	<b>Morgan (1997), Lakoff and Johnson (2003)</b>
<b>Modality</b>	Modality refers to the level of commitment that people demonstrate in talk or text. High or low modality shows variations in the degree of certainty. For example, the suffixes “I think”, “maybe” or “if” reduce the certainty of a statement.	<b>Wood and Kroger (2000), Hodge and Kress (2003), Machin and Mayr (2012)</b>
<b>Absences and silences</b>	While what is present in talk and text is important, what is not present is also significant. Alternative opinions, explanations and interpretations that are not present can reveal a particular slant in the way that ideas are reported and presented.	<b>Huckin (1997), Blommaert (2005)</b>
<b>Hedging</b>	Hedging is the purposeful avoidance of risk and a lack of certainty and commitment. Typically, hedging takes the forms of caveats, conditions and the introduction of uncertainty so that the speaker / writer cannot be held to account at some future point.	<b>Resche (2004), Machin and Mayr (2012)</b>
<b>Three-part list</b>	A rhetorical device that is pleasing for the listener or reader, and appears to completely encapsulate an idea. For example, “for you, for me, for everyone” is a three-part list which develops plenitude. The politically and	<b>Atkinson (1984, 2004), Jones and Wareing (2010)</b>

	culturally famous “education, education, education” and “location, location, location” indicate that there are no other considerations other than schooling, or where you live.	
<b>Use of “we”</b>	“We” can be inclusive or exclusive. Depending on its use, “we” can be used to develop a sense of commonality and shared experience. Alternatively, it can also be used to identify, isolate and separate.	<b>Fairclough (1989), Pennycock (1994), Krzyżanowski (2005)</b>
<b>Rhetorical contrast</b>	A rhetorical contrast describes a phenomenon, feeling, idea, event and so on in terms of opposites. These opposites can be presented as pejorative and undesirable, thus making their alternative as a more positive default.	<b>Brown and Levinson (1978, Pennycock (1994), Broda-Bahm et al. (2004), Machin and Mayr (2012)</b>

Images and other visual data was analysed according to Barthes’ semiotic model:

<b><u>Tool</u></b>	<b><u>Explanation / definition</u></b>	<b><u>Informing References</u></b>
<b>Denotation</b>	There is no neutral interpretation of any image, since readers will bring their own knowledge, perspective and opinions. The denotative level of interpretation is the most purely descriptive as it explains what can be seen, or what could be widely recognised.	<b>Barthes (1973; 1977), Bignell (2002), Chandler (2002), Machin (2007)</b>
<b>Connotation</b>	The connotative level of interpretation considers the socio-cultural associations that readers are reminded of when looking at the image. Readers will imagine meanings from other domains when interpreting the image.	
<b>Myth</b>	The myth is the ideological realm resulting from the combination of denotation and connotation. It is the widest and most abstract level of interpretation. For example, the appearance of very expensive cars and bottles of champagne in a report about executive remuneration evoke the ideological backdrop of opulence and excess.	

## Appendix 6. Interview consent.



Langman, Pearlie <pearlie.langman@itv.com>

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### Appointment to see Michael Jermey

1 message

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**Richard Thomas** <ThomasR74@cardiff.ac.uk>  
To: "Langman, Pearlie" <pearlie.langman@itv.com>

1 September 2015 at 08:23

Hi Pearlie

Just to say that I'm looking forward to meeting Michael on 10th September at Midday at South Bank.

Just to confirm too, that I'll be asking him about ITV's approach to business, financial and economic journalism, and how this sits alongside the need to generate advertising revenue. My research finds that one does not seem to determine the other, and I'm interested in Michael's opinion.

Since I am bound by university rules, I shall be asking Michael to sign a consent form - the points on the form are at the end of my mail.

I would like to tape our conversation, which I will transcribe. I will send the transcription to Michael ahead of using it in my research. He can remove any sections ahead of my using it in my thesis. Hope that is OK.

Kind wishes and many thanks again

Richard Thomas

Here is what will be written on the form -

***I understand that my participation in this project will involve speaking with Richard Thomas (Cardiff Business School) about his research and about the wider topic of economic, business and financial journalism on ITV news.***

***I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.***

***I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw or discuss any concerns with the research supervisor Dr Tim Edwards.***

***I understand that comments and quotes will be attributed to me in my professional role within ITV.***

***I understand that I can ask for the information I provide to be deleted/destroyed at any time and, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, I can have access to the information at any time.***

I, MICHAEL JERMEY [PRINT NAME] consent to participate in the study conducted by [Richard Thomas, Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University with the supervision of Dr Tim Edwards.

**Signed: Date:**

 1st October 2015

**From:** Langman, Pearlie <pearlie.langman@itv.com>

**Sent:** 20 July 2015 12:06

**To:** Richard Thomas

**Subject:** Re: Appointment to see Michael Jermy

Thanks Richard, you too.

Pearlie Langman | PA to Director of News and Current Affairs | Broadcast | ITV plc  
The London Television Centre | Upper Ground | London | SE1 9LT | Tel: 0207 157 6424  
Mob: 07979 595 780 | Pearlie.Langman@ITV.com  
ITV plc Head Office Tel +44 (0) 20 7157 3000 [itv.com](http://itv.com)

Please consider the environment before printing this email

On 20 July 2015 at 12:01, Richard Thomas <ThomasR74@cardiff.ac.uk> wrote:

Will do. Look forward to meeting you in September.

Best

Richard

## Appendix 7. Ethical approval.

ETHICS 2

### FULL ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM

**Cardiff  
Business  
School**  
Cardiff University

**Ysgol  
Fusnes  
Caerdydd**  
Prifysgol Caerdydd

(For guidance on how to complete this form, please see Learning Central – CARBS RESEARCH ETHICS)

If your research will involve patients or patient data in the NHS then you should secure approval from the NHS National Research Ethics Service. Online applications are available on <http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/applicants/>

Name of Lead Researcher : Richard Thomas

School: Cardiff Business School (CARBS)

Email: [thomasr74@cf.ac.uk](mailto:thomasr74@cf.ac.uk)

Names of other Researchers: n/a

Email addresses of other Researchers : n/a

APPLICATION APPROVED  
Research Ethics Committee  
Cardiff Business School  
Cardiff University

Title of Project: From executive remuneration to the Living Wage : Pre and post-crisis discourses of Income Distribution on UK television news

Start and Estimated End Date of Project: Start – September 2013 Submission of thesis – August 2016

**Aims and Objectives of the Research Project:**

The aim of this research is to track the way that income inequality, poverty and wealth are discursively constructed within UK broadcast media. It seeks to examine whether the financial crisis has redefined traditional models of economic, business and financial (EBF) journalism.

**Please indicate any sources of funding for this project:**

The project is funded by means of an ESRC “1+3 studentship” awarded by Cardiff Business School to cover 2012-6.

**1. Describe the methodology to be applied in the project**

An initial quantitative study (Content Analysis) identifies and quantifies EBF reporting within overall news agendas. A secondary content analysis identifies and quantifies stories about income inequality, poverty and wealth and the themes, social actors and discourses therein. These are then qualitatively explored and explained in more detail using Discourse Analysis. Finally, these methods are then supplemented by interview/s with senior broadcast media figures to add additional insight to empirical findings. Interview questions are attached.

**2. Describe the participant sample who will be contacted for this Research Project. You need to consider the number of participants, their age, gender, recruitment methods and exclusion/inclusion criteria**

There prospective interviewees within the study will be either journalists or business executives, who will be asked to discuss the narratives emerging from studied news bulletins. The nature of their senior roles determines that they will be mature individuals and of mixed gender.

**3. Describe the method by which you intend to gain consent from participants.**

Identified potential participants will be contacted through their professional roles (e.g. news channel, corporation etc). They will be approached via email, where the nature of the topic will be generally outlined. They will be advised that the study will be bound by rigorous ethical guidelines, and that full written permission will be needed before interviews commence. They will also be advised that they can withdraw from the interview process at any time. Details of briefing and consent are attached.

**4. Please make a clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them throughout the duration of the project (please use additional sheets where necessary)**

The interviews will touch upon issues surrounding professional practices and personal opinions. Albeit the questioning is not anticipated to be psychologically damaging, it may on occasions enter sensitive and emotive areas but it is expected that as eminent and trained journalists, my interviewees will not be telling me anything confidential. I am

ETHICS 2



offering all interviewees the power of veto over interview transcriptions, and am keen to forge relationship that might be revisited in the future.

**STUDENTS SHOULD BIND THE SIGNED AND APPROVED FORM INTO THEIR REPORT, DISSERTATION OR THESIS.**

*Please complete the following in relation to your research project:*

		Yes	No	n/a
(a)	Will you describe the main details of the research process to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	X		
(b)	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	X		
(c)	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	X		
(d)	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	X		
(e)	If you are using a questionnaire, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?			X
(f)	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs? (see page 2 of sheet attached)		X	
(g)	Will you offer to send participants findings from the research (e.g. copies of publications arising from the research)?	X		

**PLEASE NOTE:**

If you have ticked **No** to any of 5(a) to 5(g), please give an explanation on a separate sheet (see page 2 of attachment)  
(Note: N/A = not applicable)

There is an obligation on the principal researcher/student to bring to the attention of Cardiff Business School Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.

Signed:

(Principal Researcher/Student)

Print Name:

Richard Thomas

Date:

25 August 2015

**SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION (Student researchers only):** As the supervisor for this student project I confirm that I believe that all research ethical issues have been dealt with in accordance with University policy and the research ethics guidelines of the relevant professional organisation.

Signed:

Print Name:

Prof. P. TURNBULL

Date:

25/8/15

APPLICATION APPROVED  
Research Ethics Committee  
Cardiff Business School  
Cardiff University

*TWO copies of this form (and attachments) MUST BE OFFICIALLY STAMPED by  
Ms Lainey Clayton, Room F43, Cardiff Business School*

**STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL**

This project has been considered using agreed School procedures and is now approved.

Official stamp of approval of the School  
Research Ethics Committee

Date:

26/8/2015  
APPLICATION APPROVED  
Research Ethics Committee  
Cardiff Business School  
Cardiff University

**Appendix 8. Transcript of interview with Michael Jermey (Head of News and Current Affairs, ITV) on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 at ITV Headquarters in Southbank, London.**

RT = Author.

MJ= Michael Jermey

<b>RT</b>	<b>I have detected an element of homogeneity within the news output of ITV1 and BBC1. ITV1 is seems, has moved to a harder agenda... you are nodding – is that because it's something you know about, or were planning?</b>
<b>MJ</b>	<p>Yes... um... I find it fascinating that you looked at 2007 and 2014, and you're absolutely right - it doesn't surprise me that you've seen a difference [between the two years]. I took over my current role at the end of 2008/early 2009, although I've been involved in news a long time. Over the last few years we have had a strategy to invest in journalism in ITV, and to offer a high quality and highly credible set of programmes. Building on what's been done over the years, I think if you looked you'd see some variation in positioning of news and so on. I won't go back and talk about 2007, but I'll talk about what we aim to do. We are aiming to expand our current affairs output across the range.</p> <p>ITV has long had Britain's most watched current affairs programme which is the <i>Tonight</i> programme, which unpacks sometimes quite complex issues in a very accessible way for a mass audience. What we've done in the last number of years is to extend this into investigate journalism with <i>Exposure</i>, um ...which most notably exposed the Jimmy Savile scandal. We've extended into political discussion – <i>The Agenda</i> with Tom Bradby and we've extended in national current affairs with <i>The Assignment</i>. Investigative current affairs, foreign current affairs and political current affairs were things that in the recent past - the first 7 or 8 years of the decade - weren't really there on ITV.</p> <p>There's history of them being there though, and so we've reintroduced them - within our network news programmes we recognised and believe that our viewers want highly credible journalism around foreign and domestic current affairs. We've invested in specialist journalism - roles like Penny Marshall, our Social Affairs Editor, our excellent Political Editor Tom Bradby, and in Business and Economics where we employed in around 2012, top Business and Economic Editors in Richard Edgar who came from the <i>Financial Times</i>, Laura Kuenssberg who came from the BBC (and who has since gone back), and we replaced Laura with Joel Hills who has a great track record in business reporting. We've invested in those areas, and in your specialism - business and economics, and the other end of it, social affairs. If you looked at say, our budget programme recently we had both the business and economic sides of things, but also the social impact on the squeezed middle and the poor. With Penny Marshall, and Ragi Omar has been employed in that period to as international affairs editor we are looking at every turn to invest in high quality journalism...</p>
<b>RT</b>	<b>So what I detected then, may be the manifestation of this investment and this conscious decision-making?</b>
<b>MJ</b>	I don't want to be in any sense critical of the past, because I have been involved myself in different roles, but we have made a conscious decision to make our



	journalism as good as it can possibly be, because we think that's the right thing to do. I suspect that also, it flows well with the times – if you look back historically, I think there was probably a sense around 1989-90, the sort of end of history, end of the cold war, then there was the Bosnian civil war, and people remember a new seriousness of international affairs post 9/11- post the crash you know, there was an awful lot more attention on domestic economics and so forth, so I suspect it reflects a bit of a public mood as well.
RT	<b>You have largely answered this I think, but regarding your approach to EBF news - in the same way you've invested in these other things, given the people you've recruited and your general approach, do you also have a more serious approach to EBF news? There's one particular element that I'd like to ask you about. In 2007 you used to run this 20 or 30 second market update, tracking the Dow Jones, the pound versus the dollar and that sort of thing. This has disappeared by 2014 - now my take on that is that EBF news has become less about market fluctuations and more about people earning vast sums, working for banks that are complicit in the crash, and EBF news has become humanised almost - it's no longer about numbers it's about people - um - is that reflective of the decision to drop that market summary convention?</b>
MJ	Sometimes decisions about things like that aren't necessarily conscious. People have always been at the heart of ITV news, and we think we are good at telling stories from a people's perspective - we're on a channel that used to be called "The People's Channel". There are many decades of us being good at people-centred views - what we've tried to do in the last few years is to combine that people-centred approach with great expert analysis and making that expertise relevant to a mass audience. I think when you have limited time those conventions [the market summary] are a less good use of time, and not as good as some analysis or a people-centred story. To be honest I can't remember when or why we dropped it, we are always refreshing things in all sorts of ways... for example, this month when we relaunch News at 10 we'll probably drop the newspaper headlines at the end and have something more looking forward to tomorrow... and that's not a profound statement about newspapers, it's more about making better use of the time we have...
RT	<b>My take on your newspaper review at the end was - and you might not be surprised to hear it - that you cover more stories per bulletins - around 2 stories more than BBC. They are slightly shorter, but what seems clear is that by introducing the newspaper headlines at the end is that almost all of the time those stories haven't appeared elsewhere in the bulletin, so it's a further way to extend the news agenda...</b>
MJ	That's interesting. I suspect you'll find that the new News at 10 will contain fewer stories than the current model so we can so we can include more analysis. I think that sequence at the end will look at things that are happening tomorrow, looking ahead in a televisual way rather than with a news agenda um... and we'll experiment a bit... we're moving to a single anchor rather than a dual anchor in Tom Bradby...
RT	<b>The other thing - on a more general level - as academics we have theories suggesting that news is controlled by various outside factors, and in particular, who is advertising on your channel will shape news output - this is the theory of political economy. What is your view, as a commercial broadcaster, of how you present business news – news about business and corporations that potentially today or tomorrow, may be going to fund you with advertising?</b>
MJ	My overall answer to that is that I don't have very much to say because it doesn't

	enter my mind.
<b>RT</b>	<b>So it's a non-thing?</b>
<b>MJ</b>	Yes, it's a non-thing... journalists cover stories we think our viewers will find interesting and sure we're on a commercial channel funded by advertisers... but I don't know who's advertising at any given time... look at our Volkswagen coverage from last week - I'm sure that Volkswagen are advertising with us - we gave proper rigorous scrutiny to Volkswagen...
<b>RT</b>	<p><b>The reason for the question is this. I did some work concerning the shareholder spring in 2012 when some corporations experienced revolts over pay. I was interested in for example, how Bob Diamond of Barclays was vilified as something of a pariah, so I looked at a Barclays shareholder meeting in April 2012, and how ITV's 6.30 bulletin and Sky's 9pm and BBC's 10pm bulletins covered it. They were quite different - SKY probably did the best job because they connected it to ordinary people. In general, there was some fogging about the differences between private and institutional shareholders - the people in revolt were private shareholders with little power. The ITV package by Laura Kuenssberg was the toughest in the way it approaches the story, in contrast to the others which were more reserved – she mentioned trying to get into the meeting, how executives were jeered at and so on. It held Barclays to account in ways the other channels didn't. I looked at some more – Aviva for example. At the time, Aviva were sponsoring Downton Abbey, and they had a similar problem with a shareholder revolt over pay. Laura Kuenssberg had a live 2-way exchange with Alastair Stewart – she said that there were red faces and embarrassment at Aviva.</b></p> <p><b>It seemed that these theories of political economy were not so relevant any more... so that got me on that track of what I'll ask you about in a moment. For now, just to summarise, the nature and detail of advertising has no impact on the way you conduct your journalism? There is no connection with those who decide where certain stories appear in the running order, and which stories don't – would the editor of the day know the details about the advertising slots – and would it have any bearing on what is run and not run? I'm asking because there are a number of stories about Barclays, and several are very critical. Of the 101 advert breaks, over 80 were single advert breaks, with Barclays the only advertiser. I found a good handful of stories - some not run by the BBC at all - where your critical stories about Barclays actually segued into a Barclays advertisement. It could be a coincidence, or a deliberate demonstration that Barclays adverts have no effect on the news, or you might be saying the two things have no connection at all?</b></p>
<b>MJ</b>	There would be connection whatsoever. Let me explain what's behind whether there is an ad break or not. It's not really a case of reintroducing an ad break... the advertising sales team can put breaks where they want to across the schedule ... there are a finite number of minutes of adverts that can be run between 6 and 11, and it's averaged over that time...you can look up those rules... I think its 40 minutes over that time...at an average of about 8 minutes an hour, but you can run up 12 in any given hour and therefore on the whole the advertising will run the minutes mainly around things like Coronation Street, Emmerdale and the peak dramas. In other words, where we have the biggest audience. Therefore, there will be less advertising around either the 6.30 news or News at 10, simply because of that, and you'll see advertising reappear after 10pm, because those are the rules. But, if an advertiser wants to advertise somewhere else, then they'll create a slot for them. I think – although I've never really discussed this with the advertising team, that they

	put a break in (the news) because people are quite keen to advertise in the news um ... and now I'm guessing, because it's a serious environment within which to see your advertisement and if my memory serves me right, quite a lot of those brand spots for Barclays, they were about young people...
<b>RT</b>	<b>Yes they were - they were the ads about the digital eagles and all of those things...</b>
<b>MJ</b>	The programme editor won't have been aware of who was going to advertise there... although as you say they do appear there so often...
<b>RT</b>	<b>So they'll have a rough idea that that is going to happen?</b>
<b>MJ</b>	I have never had a discussion with the advertising people at any point about those ads, they've kept running, and I've never had a discussion with the programme editor about what stories they chose to run...so there is a disconnect between the two.
<b>RT</b>	<b>I guess - and this is a question for Barclays really - knowing that as an organisation they were going through trauma on a number of fronts, would they then fund some adverts that promoted a different side of banking – “we help people, we have a human side” and so on – it's like getting their retaliation in first I suppose...</b>
<b>MJ</b>	What does occasionally happen is that if airline x had a campaign scheduled in various programmes, and that airline has a crash that day, they might chose to take their ads out of the schedule, that's the sort of change more likely to happen...
<b>RT</b>	<b>So if an organisation has an agreement with you whereby you run x number of their adverts every day, and then something happens, fairly quickly they could come on to you and say – please don't run our ads today?</b>
<b>MJ</b>	Yes but they would come on to the advertising sales department, and not the news department.
<b>RT</b>	<b>So these are departments that are running autonomously and journalistically, never the twain shall meet?</b>
<b>MJ</b>	Yes, yes....
<b>RT</b>	<b>And could they withdraw adverts that same day for example?</b>
<b>MJ</b>	Yes, that could be arranged very quickly, yes.
<b>RT</b>	<b>More broadly, within journalism studies, we have a range of selection theories – you've probably heard of the gatekeeper one – and there is another one which we call news values – that suggests that stories about elite people, elite nations, bad news, news with consonance with a white Anglo Saxon audience, that's more likely to make the news...</b>
<b>MJ</b>	Well, I think our audience is more diverse - the thing is, whether our newsrooms are diverse enough...
<b>RT</b>	<b>So those institutional biases - we suspect that news is rated in terms of whether people will find it interesting or not... is it any more formal than that gut feel of this is a good story and that isn't? In other words, there is no big list of characteristics to tick off?</b>
<b>MJ</b>	I think this is really interesting territory... and .... yes, of course there is no list, but I think we are more conscious now than when I started in the news about unconscious bias, about not just doing what people are interested in... there is much more challenge and discussion about what goes into programming... regional news for example, in all ITV regions have a regional diversity panel that reaches out to all community groups - we get them to review our programmes to get their perspective on how different communities have been treated in the news - that didn't happen 30 years ago. I think we're conscious that a lot of news viewers are in inverted commas “white and male”, and we look to make that not exclusively the case... we are very open to you know... we want our programmes to be more diverse reflecting the UK

	as a whole, yes... but there's a 30-minute programme and you have to make decisions as to what goes in it. We don't necessarily think there are tablets of stone around right or wrong decisions - we are happy to debate those and to challenge ourselves.
RT	<b>So what you're saying then is that there are news selection processes, but they are very reflective, they are more careful than they ever were, and are more determined to be more diverse and so on, but even so they are news selection processes, built on the experience of those making the decisions... you know, that's an important story and we know why that's the case, and it may get into the bulletin ahead of something else...</b>
MJ	And also over a period of time, so we don't do the same things all the time, you know - we looked at Zimbabwe, so that doesn't come in every day, but we absolutely need to make space for it...
RT	<b>And what was interesting in 2007 was - and I recall twice when you did this - you did a thing on global warming and you had Mark Austin [ITV anchor] pretty much presenting News at 10 from a boat in the Antarctic and once a massive shard of ice fell in the sea behind him...</b>
MJ	I remember it very well...
RT	<b>The other time was when you delivered a week's worth of programmes from the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe, and there was some covert filming. I guess if you've sent your team there, you need to get your money's worth out of it?</b>
MJ	It's recognition also that there are some stories that you cover on a daily basis and there are others like global warming in the Antarctic that are harder to get at so you... you chose a time to do that so people who are watching over months have been exposed to a range of wider issues rather than just what happened on a particular day...
RT	<b>In terms of business news, do all the same things apply? Some things are episodic and unusual - would you say that was the case? I mean, there's nothing special about business news that wouldn't have the same rules and decisions making processes?</b>
MJ	Um, it not a business channel, it's a general channel, so there are social affairs, politics, sport and breaking news that will all feature on any given day... and you might get a particular business story – how much prominence it gets will depend on what else is happening in the world...
RT	<b>Yes, because from 2007, to 2015 there was an appreciative jump in the amount of business news – do I take from your answer that this would be you just following world events – this was not you saying we have to cover more business news?</b>
MJ	No, it's a bit of both – I think we need to invest in our business and economics, we made a conscious decision to improve our business reporting which was triggered by two things - one - it was in absolute terms I thought we should do better, but also post-crash, it was of more immediate relevance to our viewers.
RT	<b>The financial crash - do you think that its changed your approach to business news, which I guess you've answered - you've made conscious efforts and investment in improvement, with the quality of your recruits and slightly following world events as well, um... but you've not all sat around and said there a financial crash, we must change the way that we look at?</b>
MJ	There's a constant review where we look at what we're doing and how we're doing it and if we could do better, and I suppose none of ever said we are going to do x or y about it, but how can we get better, but that would apply equally to pour political or sporting coverage...

RT	<b>Finally, um... we have this theory that you know, journalist are in the pockets of the big hitters in the city...</b>
MJ	Our journalists obviously talk to people in the city. I spend no time whatever talking to people in the city... if someone is looking for a power elite not in touch with the real world, that's not the case.
RT	<b>From the examples I've quoted like Barclays and so on, if that was the case, you wouldn't be reporting things so critically, especially when BBC are ignoring those stories, but I think I found across the board that where these theories of political economy might not always be so useful to analyse news outputs. The other thing you've told me about today is strategic improvement programme that you have carried out. But what doesn't happen although you're prepared to criticise corporations and organisations like banks, this whole neoliberal model of "the markets will fix it" um... and these kind of radical ideas that you are getting from various sources that there should be a different way of doing things - neither channel seem to be advancing that far, so the criticism has gone so far, but has then stopped...</b>
MJ	Yes, this is part of a whole debate that is also part of impartiality and so on - we are a broadcaster that has impartiality running through our DNA - it exists in the form of the regulations, but also culturally it's also there. If you lifted the impartiality regulations, it would still be there culturally - we believe that rather than it just being imposed upon us. So that means in the debate between Piketty and neoliberals in the U.S, we are impartial and we try to examine both views. Does that mean that if you're coming from either of those views you see us as entirely impartial, that's a more philosophical debate. We think it's right to air those views and um... we try to give people a range of views and information. But you're probably right that our criticism will be about behaviour that our audience finds unethical or illegal, rather than our programmes daily challenging the basis of capitalism... and one of the great things about pluralistic media is that there are places where you can see challenges to capitalism and challenges to state intervention.
RT	<b>Perhaps it's not entirely a failing of broadcasters either - maybe the models - the alternatives models - they aren't well enough defined and until they become a little more sophisticated, and better explained, they might not get the coverage?</b>
MJ	We are a mainstream news service and as part of that we will give coverage to issues that interest mainstream audiences - now that doesn't mean that we won't look at stuff outside of the mainstream - we will - but it does mean we'll spend less time doing that but you know, if you look at the election of Jeremy Corbyn [as Labour Party leader] ... some ideas that weren't discussed in the mainstream are now being discussed, and we're dealing with that in the same way we've always dealt with those things...
RT	<b>It brings me to my last question, which is about income inequality. I can see that wealth would be something relatively easy to show on TV news - there are some clear indexical indicators of that... Rolls Royces, nice houses and so on ... then there's poverty, which would be people struggling, food banks and so on. But this thing income inequality is a kind of abstract things that lives in between those two somewhere - my take on that is that because its less tangible - it's a difference, a gap - it's hard to cover - how do you show it ? It's something with a lot of traction, that inequality in society causes all of social ills - I'm sue you've come across "The Spirit Level" by Wilkinson and Pickett, where they connect to drug taking, teenage</b>

	<b>pregnancy, mental illness and so on. Would you see a difficult issue like this as just coming out in the wash, or would you say that we need to do what we can to make that understandable... it's just that there are very few stories about income inequality on TV news...</b>
<b>MJ</b>	That's interesting. We have featured lots of stories about people who are the squeezed middle ...um because a lot of those people are our core audience if you look at the demographic split...
<b>RT</b>	<b>Yes, and there were so many more stories about tem than about the issue of income inequality, because that's where the population is?</b>
<b>MJ</b>	I think we reflect that issue... for example, we might commission a current affairs programme on income inequality and we've done stories on stories about John Lewis and specific stories about um... I think it's probably something that we have a reasonably accurate impression of what's happening on that rather than us doing it every night.
<b>RT</b>	<b>Yes, it seems to be an inferred thing rather than "yes, now were going to talk about income inequality, and we're going to tell you why it's important". That part of the narrative is missing, but the bit that is there, as you say, is that you used to be able to go on holidays every year, but now you can't, your mortgage was affordable and now it isn't, borrowing money was easy now it isn't. What I was interesting to find out was whether this big idea of Wilkinson and Pickett's - that the problem was the gap - whether it's mentioned or not - so you've sort of answered this by suggesting that the forum to make the connection maybe somewhere other than a 3-minute news package...</b>
<b>MJ</b>	Although I'd like to think we did reflect it across our news coverage and that if someone only watched ITV news is was something that was discussed at various points, and to be honest, I watch our programmes all the time, and you know, in 2013, for example, our special budget programme very directly addressed some of that - um - when income inequality reports have come out they've hit our agenda, and um, it may be something alongside lots of other things we should do a bit more of, but you know, given the pressure of lots of other things...
<b>RT</b>	<b>Yes, its certainly all the data is - you could have this complex report on income inequality and what it is and how its evaluated and so on... or we could talk to our audience about how their lives have been affected by the recession and so on...and that's clearly easier to understand and to present... and clearly that means more to people...</b>
<b>MJ</b>	Having watched the whole of 2014 news output as you have- what surprised you?
<b>RT</b>	<b>I went into it thinking ITV news was going to be much more sensational and dramatic, there was a lot of homogeneity, I was surprised that ITV was as close to BBC as it was, in terms of production values news agenda, and the general formats, and in many cases and that you provided a level of probing that BBC do not. That's my "surprise" thing.</b>

The interview was concluded up after some general discussion not related to the topic.